ROLLING STONES STICKY FINGERS AT 50

The Rolling Stones
Sticky Fingers

MOJO

The Music Magazine

159 REVIEWS
DAVID CROSBY, DURAND JONES, LAURA NYRO, CHRISSIE HYNDE & MORE

10 YEARS ON…

AMY WINEHOUSE

THE ARTIST. BY THOSE WHO KNEW HER BEST

ZZ TOP
BEARDS! BUZZARDS! ENDLESS BOOGIE!

CROWDED HOUSE
DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER

YOLA
COUNTRY SOUL'S NEW STAR

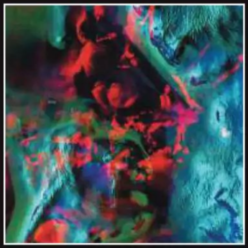
FAMILY
PROG'S BLACK SHEEP

VIOLENT FEMMES
BLISTERING!

NICO
THE VELVETS' REVOLUTIONARY

PLUS!
- GEORGE HARRISON
- ALICE COLTRANE
- THE STRANGLERS
- JACKSON BROWNE
- PREFAB SPROUT

CARGO COLLECTIVE



LUCY GOOCH

RAIN'S BREAK EP

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Lucy Gooch's music is a beautiful ethereal fog; like hearing a subliminal echo of Kate Bush on a fading tape loop. 'Rain's Break' follows the much-touted 'Rushing' EP. "The moment is short, but Lucy Gooch's music makes it last forever" NPR

THE HOLY FAMILY

THE HOLY FAMILY

THE HOLY FAMILY

ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

A haunting, fog-draped voyage of kosmische polyrhythms and psych folk wonder – a stellar kaleidoscopic vision from a new band featuring members of Guapo, The Utopia Strong, Coil, Chrome Hoof etc.

КАПЛЯСЛЕЗЫ ВЗРЫВАЕТСЯ

JULIAN COPE & THE TEARDROP EXPLODES

COLD WAR PSYCHEDELIA

HEAD HERITAGE LP

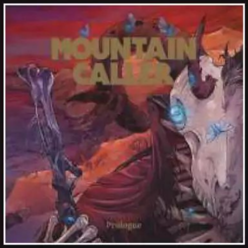
Exhilarating! Dynamic! 1982 music from the Death Throes of Liverpool's maddest band. Also, 1989 Head-On reflections in spoken word & breath-taking Post-Punk sound collage. Clad in appropriately intriguing packaging? U-Betcha!

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS

DARK IN HERE

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

12 songs for singing in caves, bunkers, foxholes, and secret spaces beneath the floorboards



MOUNTAIN CALLER

CHRONICLE: PROLOGUE EP

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS 12"

Mountain Caller return with a new EP. The conceptual prequel to their debut album, showcasing the band's dynamic mix of heavy, expansive and progressive metal.

PART CHIMP

DROOL

WRONG SPEED RECORDS LP / CD

With a skewed melodic skill to match their mighty potency, Part Chimp will demolish your house, but you'll cheerfully thank them for it afterwards. A joy through vacuum-tubed catharsis .

HOLLIE KENNIFF

THE QUIET DRIFT

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

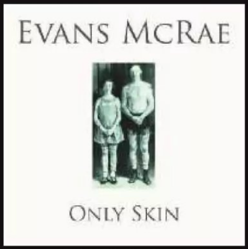
An ambient gallery of cloudlike synths and wordless vocals. Bleep says it's "some of the nicest ambient composition we've heard in a while" RIYL Grouper, Julianna Barwick, Malibu, Cocteau Twins

CEDRIC BURNSIDE

I BE TRYING

SINGLE LOCK RECORDS LP / CD

The blues is music for all time, past, present, and future and few artists simultaneously exemplify those multiple temporal moments of the genre like North Mississippi's Cedric Burnside.

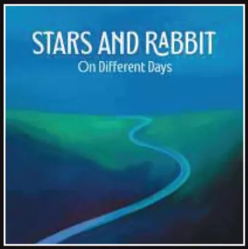


EVANS MCRAE

ONLY SKIN

E&M RECORDS CD

Only Skin is the debut album from Evans McRae, a new collaboration from seasoned song-writers Tom McRae & Lowri Evans. This stunning & eclectic suite of emotionally sophisticated songs shows a new side to both these much-loved artists.



STARS AND RABBIT

ON DIFFERENT DAYS

TRAPPED ANIMAL LP

The Indonesian duo - huge in their home country – first release with UK's Trapped Animal, a trippy indie-folk wander through the last year. An album full of hope. FFO Cardigans, Les Paul Mary Ford.

JODI

BLUE HERON

SOOPER RECORDS LP / CD

On their debut LP Blue Heron, songwriter Nick Levine's soft-spoken "queer country" songs deliver a series of intimate moments capable of turning your inner world upside down with a whisper.

BACAO RHYTHM & STEEL BAND

EXPANSIONS

BIG CROWN RECORDS LP / CD

On their 3rd album, aptly titled Expansions, BRSB are back. Covering songs that span genres & range from mega hits to album cuts, they make them their own with their unique approach to the traditional steel pans of Trinidad & Tobago.

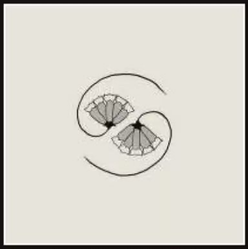
The Quireboys
a bit of what you fancy

THE QUIREBOYS

A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY (30TH ANNIVERSARY)

OFF YER ROCKA LP / CD

Re-recorded version of this classic album to mark the albums 30th Anniversary -. Features new Gypsy Rock n' Roll versions of 'I Don't Love You Anymore' and 'Mayfair' plus two additional live tracks



GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR

G_D'S PEE AT STATE'S END

CONSTELLATION LP / CD

GYBE returns with a soundtrack for our times: two riveting side-lengths of noise-drenched post-rock spittle and grit, two shorter elegiac companion pieces. Deluxe vinyl is 180gLP + 10" in thermograph gatefold.

BRAINSTORY
Ripe

BRAINSTORY

RIPE

BIG CROWN RECORDS LP / CD

Produced by Brainstory, mixed by Leon Michels and recorded during the thick of the Covid lockdown. Ripe pulls from Jazz, Hip Hop, 70s Funk, 60s Soul, and life in Southern California in the year 2021.

WHITE FLOWERS

DAY BY DAY

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Day By Day is the dark-hued dreampop debut from Preston duo, White Flowers, recorded in an abandoned textile mill and produced with Doves' Gez Williams.

AN AMALGAMATION OF RECORD SHOPS AND LABELS DEDICATED TO BRINGING YOU NEW MUSIC

IRELAND: DUBLIN - SPINDIZZY / KILKENNY - ROLLER COASTER RECORDS NORTHERN IRELAND: SABLE STARR RECORDS SCOTLAND: DUNDEE - ASSAI / EDINBURGH - ASSAI / GLASGOW - LOVE MUSIC / GLASGOW - MONORAIL / WALES: ABERYSTWYTH - ANDY'S RECORDS / BANGOR - BENDING SOUND / CAMARTHENSHIRE - TANGLED PARROT / CARDIFF - SPILLERS / NEWPORT - DIVERSE / SWANSEA - DERRICKS / SWANSEA - TANGLED PARROT NORTH- WEST: BARROW-IN-FURNESS – TNT RECORDS / LIVERPOOL - 81 RENSHAW LTD / LIVERPOOL - PROBE / MANCHESTER - PICCADILLY RECORDS / PRESTON - ACTION RECORDS NORTH-EAST: BINGLEY - FIVE RISE RECORDS / HARROGATE - P & C MUSIC / HEADINGLEY - VINYL WHISTLE / HUDDERSFIELD - VINYL TAP / LEEDS - CRASH / LEEDS - JUMBO RECORDS / NEWCASTLE - J G WINDOWS / NEWCASTLE - BEATDOWN / NEWCASTLE - BEYOND VINYL / NEWCASTLE - REFLEX / SCARBOROUGH - RECORD REVIVALS / SHEFFIELD - BEAR TREE / SHEFFIELD - RECORD COLLECTOR / SHEFFIELD - SPINNING DISCS / STOCKTON ON TEES - SOUND IT OUT / WAKEFIELD - WAH WAH RECORDS MIDLANDS: BEDFORD - SLIDE RECORDS / CAMBRIDGE - LOST IN VINYL / CAMBRIDGE - RELEVANT / COVENTRY - JUST DROPPED IN / DERBY - REVEAL RECORDS / LEAMINGTON SPA - HEAD / LEAMINGTON SPA - SEISMIC RECORDS / LEIGHTON BUZZARD - BLACK CIRCLE RECORDS / LETCHWORTH - DAVID'S MUSIC / LOUTH - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK / NOTTINGHAM - ROUGH TRADE / OXFORD - TRUCK STORE / STOKE ON TRENT - MUSIC MANIA / STOKE ON TRENT - STRAND RECORDS / WITNEY - RAPTURE SOUTH: BEXHILL ON SEA - MUSIC'S NOT DEAD / BLANDFORD FORUM - REVOLUTION ROCKS / BOURNEMOUTH - AVID RECORDS / BOURNEMOUTH - VINILO / BRIGHTON - RESIDENT / BURY ST.EDMUNDS - VINYL HUNTER / GODALMING - RECORD CORNER/ HASTINGS - CLOTH AND WAX / LEIGH-ON-SEA - FIVES / LONDON - BANQUET GRAVITY / LONDON - CASBAH / LONDON - FLASHBACK / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE EAST / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE TALBOT RD / LONDON - SISTER RAY / LUTON - VINYL REVELATIONS / ROMSEY - HUNDRED / SOUTHSEA - PIE & VINYL / SOUTHEND ON SEA - SOUTH RECORDS / ST ALBANS - EMPIRE RECORDS / WATFORD - LP CAFE / WIMBORNE - SQUARE RECORDS / WHITSTABLE - GATEFIELD SOUNDS / WINCHESTER - ELEPHANT RECORDS SOUTH WEST: BRISTOL - RADIO ON / BRISTOL - ROUGH TRADE / CHELTENHAM - BADLANDS / FALMOUTH - JAM / FROME – RAVES FROM THE GRAVE / MARLBOROUGH - SOUND KNOWLEDGE / TOTNES - DRIFT MAILORDER AND INTERNET ONLY STORES: BLEEP.COM / BOOMKAT.COM / JUNORECORDS / MARBLE VINYL RECORDS / NORMANRECORDS.COM / PEBBLERECORDS.CO.UK / RECORDSTORE.CO.UK

17 HEATHMAN'S ROAD, LONDON SW6 4TJ - CARGORECORDS.CO.UK - INFO@CARGORECORDS.CO.UK

CONTENTS

LONDON ✦ MEMPHIS ✦ LEICESTER

AUGUST 2021 **Issue 333**

David Montgomery

> "It's a team, isn't it: Mick Jagger and Keith Richards? It was unheard of to let someone else in."
>
> **MARIANNE FAITHFULL ON THE GLIMMER TWINS CIRCA STICKY FINGERS P58**

FEATURES

26 BILLY F GIBBONS Texan blues surrealist, stylist and survivor: ZZ Top's mainman runs on a full tank of *brio*. But does he sleep with his beard under or over the covers?

32 CROWDED HOUSE The Antipodes' second-biggest pop export are back, after self-doubt, sackings and a suicide. Fleetwood Mac a role model? Surprisingly, yes.

38 YOLA Deep soul stirrings from the Brit belter, now with added attitude (and Dan Auerbach). "Nashville's been a magic place for me," she tells Bill DeMain.

42 ROGER CHAPMAN Family's *force majeure* chose rock over jail, but at 79 he's no closer to compromising: "I just get on stage and sing things I like."

48 VIOLENT FEMMES Gordon Gano's acousti-punks turned busking into records before turning on each other. MOJO talks to all the members of a band ahead of its time.

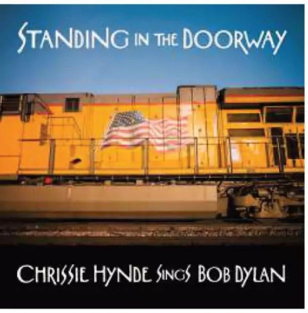
52 NICO Have the creative gifts of the Velvet Underground siren been belittled? A focus on her early solo albums and seismic encounter with Jim Morrison suggests so.

58 THE ROLLING STONES Fifty years old and still swaggering, *Sticky Fingers* is unzipped by our panel of experts. Plus: the final destination of The Rolling Stones Mobile.

COVER STORY

66 AMY WINEHOUSE Ten years since her tragic death, the depth and breadth of the Southgate soul diva's dazzling talents are still being fathomed. Friends and colleagues celebrate a singer and songwriter *sans pareil*.

Bring it all back: Jakob Dylan and the return of The Wallflowers, Albums, p84.



IAN CARR'S NUCLEUS
ROOTS

Get on the bus: meet Ellen McIlwaine, Cult Heroes, p20.

All signs point to Durand Jones & The Indications, Lead Album p78.

MOJO

REGULARS

9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Joan Armatrading, Danny Elfman and Faye Webster get busy on the ones and twos.

106 REAL GONE Lloyd Price, Anita Lane, Pervis Staples, Roger Hawkins and many others, so sorry you had to go.

112 ASK MOJO Which sure-fire superhits fizzled out when first released?

114 HELLO GOODBYE Yes, it's her. Wendy Smith recalls time in the magical shadow world of Prefab Sprout.

WHAT GOES ON!

12 SUMMER OF SOUL A massive festival of soul in Harlem in summer '69? How could we not know? The Roots' Questlove's directorial movie debut unearths the story, starring Stevie, Sly, Nina Simone and others.

16 THE STRANGLERS Last year, we lost Stranglers keyboardist Dave Greenfield to Covid. Bassist JJ Burnel knew they had to finish the LP they'd started with him. "We've still got a lot to prove to ourselves," he reflects.

18 JACKSON BROWNE With new LP *Downhill From Everywhere*, the veteran singer-songwriter gets in Confidential mood and reflects on feuds, excess and politics, admitting, "I basically know nothing."

19 ALICE COLTRANE A new archival release finds the spiritual jazz icon in hymnal voice and organ form. Her son Ravi, who oversaw the record, says: "When I heard [the tapes], I was blown away."

22 SQUID Rising! The un-linear Brighton post-punks talk Krautrock, JG Ballard and painful in-band democracy. Across the page, the Lahore/Boston minimalism of Arooj Aftab.

MOJO FILTER

78 NEW ALBUMS Durand Jones, David Crosby, Chrissie Hynde and much more!

92 REISSUES Laura Nyro, Mudhoney, Annette Peacock, The White Stripes and more.

103 SCREEN Sam Cooke to Suge Knight, an Amazing Snakehead to sisters with transistors.

104 BOOKS Will Sergeant's Bunnyman, plus The Orb, Nico, the '80s and another Dylan tome!

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Dr Jennifer Otter Bickerdike

The author of Why Vinyl Matters, Jennifer's Rock N Roll Confidential podcast starts in August, with guests including Johnny Marr, Blake Schwarzenbach and Will Sergeant. From California, she now lives in London with husband James and dog Alfie. Her new book about Nico is extracted from p52.

Andy Fyfe

The first time Kiwi native Fyfe interviewed Crowded House was for NME in 1994, just three weeks after Paul Hester had left the group. After moving to the UK in 1988, Andy worked on the staff at NME, Select and then Q, and has contributed to MOJO since 2005. In this issue, he reconnects with Neil Finn & Co from p32.

Jim Herrington

Jim has photographed the greats, near-misses and never-weres of the music/celebrity world for decades, the evidence soon to be seen in a second volume of his work. The Climbers (2017) was the first. Jim photos Yola for MOJO Presents, p38. Instagram: @jimherrington. Website: www.jimherrington.com

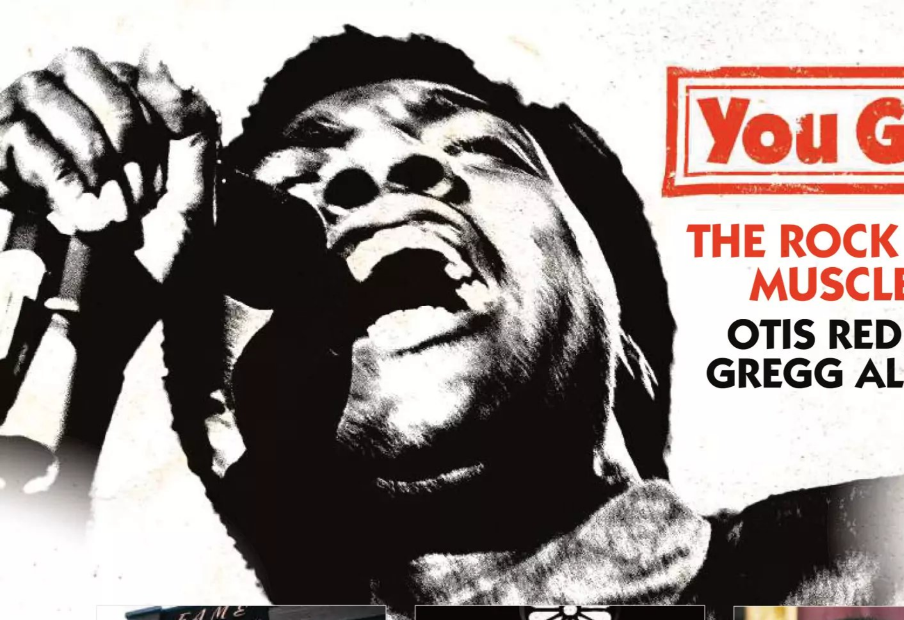
Panik

THE RESURGENCE OF
MATT SWEENEY
& BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY
SUPERWOLVES

SPECIAL EXCLUSIVE LP & CD BUNDLES
AVAILABLE FROM **DOMINOMUSIC.COM**

BE AWARE OF SUPERWOLVES

Domino



You Gotta Move!

THE ROCK & SOUL SOUNDS OF MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA

OTIS REDDING, WILSON PICKETT GREGG ALLMAN, BETTYE LAVETTE JASON ISBELL & MORE

MOJO

1 FAME GANG
Soul Feud

The Swampers, featuring Roger Hawkins, might have been the most famous Muscle Shoals backing band. But in 1969, after a spat with boss Rick Hall, they left Fame to set up their own Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. In their place, Hall recruited a new crew, later known as The Fame Gang, who also recorded a couple of singles. Soul Feud, from 1969, makes a tremendously funky, strutting overture to our comp.

Written by Albert Lowe, Jesse Boyce. Screen Gems-EMI

2 BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
I Can See

A gospel institution for over 80 years, the Blind Boys originally formed in Talladega, three hours from Muscle Shoals, in 1939. This righteous track, made there in 2017, features founder member Clarence Fountain.

Written by Joey Williams, Ray Ladson, Jimmy Sloan. Published by BBOA Publishing (BMI). Administered by BMG / DoraSues Publishing (BMI) / Modern Roots Music and Publishing (BMI). From *Almost Home* (Single Lock Records); www.singlelock.com Recorded at FAME Studios, Muscle Shoals, Alabama USA. Produced by Steve Berlin

3 WILSON PICKETT
Save Me

Few artists who passed through Fame had more of an impact than Wilson Pickett, who recorded numerous sessions at the studio for Atlantic in the '60s. This rave-up, penned by Fame regulars George Jackson and Dan Greer, opened 1968's *Hey Jude*; an LP also notable for introducing the guitar skills of Duane Allman.

Written by Dan Greer, George Jackson. Published by Fame, BMI ℗1969 WEA International Inc. USAT20103617 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

4 BETTYE LAVETTE
I Still Want To Be Your Baby (Take Me Like I Am)

LaVette first turned up at Fame in 1972, recording an album – *Child Of The Seventies* – bafflingly shelved until 2015. By then, she'd made a return visit in 2007 and worked with second generation Shoals rockers the Drive-By Truckers on the fine *Scene Of The Crime*. It's written by another key player, guitarist Eddie Hinton, more of whom later.

Written by Edward C Hinton. ℗&©2007 Anti, Inc. Published by Eddie Hinton Music (BMI). From *The Scene of The Crime*.

9 EDDIE HINTON
Cover Me

A session guitar regular in Muscle Shoals, Eddie Hinton was also a terrific songwriter – very much a contemporary of Dan Penn – and a pretty handy vocalist, too. His most famous song might be Breakfast In Bed, but we've gone for Hinton's demo of this plaintive Southern soul classic, given the full-on treatment by Percy Sledge in 1968 and then Jackie Moore in 1971.

Written by Greene, Hinton. Published by Warner Chappell Music Ltd ℗&©2000 Eddie Hinton. From *Dear Y'all* (Zane Records) www.zanerecords.com applemusic.com

10 JIMMY HUGHES
I'm Qualified

Another one of Fame's early intake alongside Arthur Alexander, Jimmy Hughes was a local gospel singer and cousin of Percy Sledge, who recorded Rick Hall and Quin Ivy's I'm Qualified in 1962. When the single flopped, Hughes went back to work in a rubber factory, but his persistence would eventually pay off a couple of years later when he took a new song of his, Steal Away, to Hall. The resulting single made it as high as 17 in the US charts.

Written by Quin Ivy, Rick Hall. Screen Gems – EMI

11 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
Where The Devil Don't Stay

Although DBTs have been torch-bearers for Muscle Shoals culture for over two decades, thanks to the local roots of core members Patterson Hood and Mike Cooley, their long recording career has rarely strayed back to the area. But 2004's mighty fifth album *The Dirty South*, was recorded at Fame and opened with this searing, Cooley-fronted rocker.

Written by Cooley / Cooley. Published by Wayward Johnson's Music (BMI). ℗&©2004 New West Records. From *The Dirty South* (New West Records). www.newwestrecords.com

12 JOHNNIE TAYLOR
Walk Away With Me

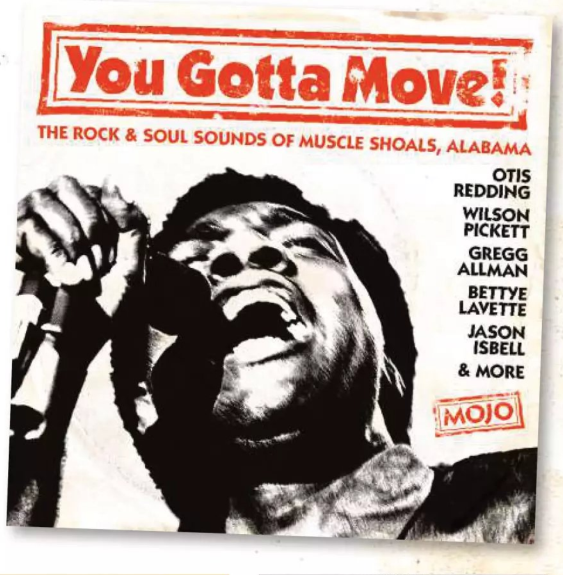
Some soul legends took their time making it to Muscle Shoals, a case in point being Johnnie Taylor. His career began in the 1950s, singing gospel alongside Al Green, and by the late '60s was a cornerstone of the Stax roster. His Muscle Shoals era began in the '80s and peaked with 1996's *Good Love!* – where this Dark End Of The Street-like quiet storm, featuring the Swampers, comes from.

Written by George Jackson. Peer Music III, Malaco Music

Getty (4), Alamy, Ace Records, Alysse Gafkjen, Danny Clinch, Jim Herrington

MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA, FIRST APPEARED ON THE musical map 99 years ago, with local eminence W.C. Handy recording his Muscle Shoals Blues in tribute. But its critical role really began in the late '50s, when Rick Hall and his associates launched their Fame Studios in the area. By 1961, they had their first hit record – Arthur Alexander's You Better Move On – and, soon, the area had become a crucible of soul and southern rock, and of elite recording practices at both Fame and the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio just down the road.

It was at the latter that The Rolling Stones recorded You Gotta Move, Brown Sugar and Wild Horses, and this month's feature on *Sticky Fingers* provided the initial impetus for us to compile this MOJO CD of Muscle Shoals nuggets. Sadly, however, *You Gotta Move!* has also turned out to be a memorial to one of the Muscle Shoals greats, drummer Roger Hawkins, who passed away on May 20. Rhythm pivot of The Swampers, the studio's imperturbably groovy house band, Hawkins played on multitudes of great records that crystallised the local sound, not least Wilson Pickett's Save Me. This compilation, encompassing 60 years of extraordinary Muscle Shoals music, is dedicated to his memory.



5 GREGG ALLMAN

My Only True Friend

A by-product of Duane Allman's link with Fame is that he and brother Gregg's pre-Allmans band, Hour Glass, recorded there in 1968. Nearly 50 years later, Gregg was back for the sessions that became his last LP, 2017's *Southern Blood*. Mostly covers, but including this poignant new burner: "I hope you're haunted by the music of my soul, when I'm gone."

Written by Gregg Allman. Published by KOBALT MUSIC PUB AMERICA I OBO D DEM MUSIC ℗&©2017 Rounder Records. From *Southern Blood* (Rounder Records) www.rounder.com

6 JASON ISBELL

Heart On A String

Another George Jackson co-write, best known from the version on Candi Staton's 1970 Fame debut, *I'm Just A Prisoner*. A more recent Fame graduate, Isbell grew up locally and met Swampers bass David Hood in his teens. Part of Drive-By Truckers with Hood's son Patterson, Isbell went solo in 2007: this crunchy take comes from 2011's *Here We Rest*.

Written by George Jackson, Mickey Buckins. Published by 50.00% EMI Music Publishing 50.00% ℗&©2019 Southeastern. From *Here We Rest* (Southeastern)

7 OTIS REDDING

You Left The Water Running

It's one hell of a demo. Visiting Fame in '66, Redding was asked by Rick Hall to run through this Dan Penn tune in preparation for Wilson Pickett's version that figured on 1967's *The Wicked Pickett*. Otis's take briefly surfaced as a bootleg 7-inch in the mid '70s, before official release in '87.

Written by Wallace Daniel Pennington, Roe Erister Hall, Oscar Eugene Franck. Published by Screen Gems-EMI Music Publishing (BMI) / Irving Music, Inc, BMI ℗1968 WEA International Inc. USAT20000310 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

8 ARTHUR ALEXANDER

You Better Move On

Where it all began. Florence, Alabama local Arthur Alexander had one single under his belt when he entered the original Florence home of Fame in 1961 and cut his own country-soul beauty with Rick Hall. Fame's first hit (Number 24 in the US), it helped finance Hall's move to his more famous Muscle Shoals facility on Avalon Avenue. Note, too, a Rolling Stones cover on their 1964 self-titled EP.

Written by Arthur Alexander. Screen Gems-EMI

13 JAMES GOVAN

Take Me Just As I Am

You might know Dan Penn/Spooner Oldham's gem from Solomon Burke. But this 1969 version by the lesser-known Govan is delivered with much more zip than Burke. Govan, sometimes called Little Otis, was discovered by George Jackson and recorded several singles for Fame in the late '60s and early '70s, without ever getting a break. A major neglected talent, it transpires, who worked Memphis' Beale Street for the last 25 years of his life.

Written by Dan Penn, Spooner Oldham. Screen Gems-EMI

14 LITTLE MILTON

Love Is A Gamble

Like his Malaco labelmate Johnnie Taylor, Inverness, Mississippi's James Milton Campbell Jr was an R&B vet who found his way to Muscle Shoals Sound Studio later in life. Discovered by Ike Turner, signed to Sun and Stax, covered by The Spencer Davis Group, an electric blues guitarist and vocalist of considerable swagger, Love Is A Gamble can be found on 1994's *I'm A Gambler*. Campbell died in 2005, just short of his 71st birthday.

Written by Milton Campbell. Peer Music III, Malaco music, Trice Pub

3614 JACKSON HIGHWAY

15 THE SWAMPERS

Muscle Shoals Malmo Express

Finally, spotlight on a peerless house band: (above, from left) Jimmy Johnson (guitar), Roger Hawkins (drums) David Hood (bass), Barry Beckett (keys). From '70s sessions for an M.G.'s-style Swampers album only released in 2018, hear what Lynyrd Skynyrd meant when they sang: "Now Muscle Shoals has got The Swampers/And they've been known to pick a song or two/Lord, they get me off so much/They pick me up when I'm feeling blue…"

Written by Roger Hawkins, Jimmy Johnson

"It's just that demon life has got you in its sway…"

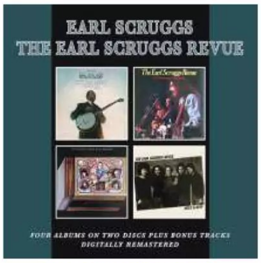
STICKY FINGERS AT 50.

CELEBRATIONS COMMENCE PAGE 58

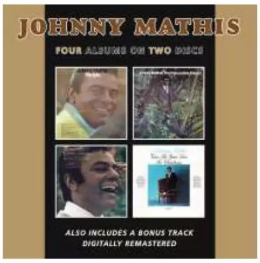
THE BEAT GOES ON...

New releases from BGO Records

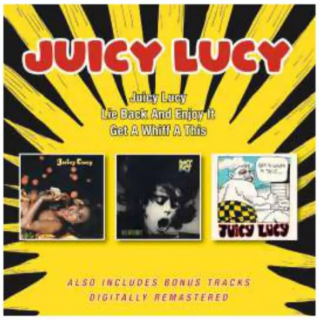
For these and more great releases,
visit our website at www.bgo-records.com


EARL SCRUGGS
THE EARL SCRUGGS REVUE
FOUR ALBUMS ON TWO DISCS PLUS BONUS TRACKS
DIGITALLY REMASTERED

EARL SCRUGGS
I Saw The Light With Some Help... etc / Live! From Austin City Limits / Strike Anywhere / Bold And New
BGOCD1444


JOHNNY MATHIS
FOUR ALBUMS ON TWO DISCS
ALSO INCLUDES A BONUS TRACK
DIGITALLY REMASTERED

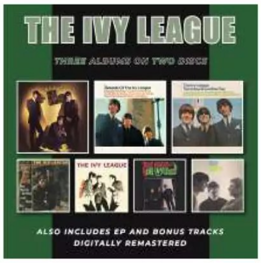
JOHNNY MATHIS
People / The Impossible Dream / Love Theme From "Romeo And Juliet" / Give Me Your Love For Christmas
BGOCD1452


JUICY LUCY
Juicy Lucy
Lie Back And Enjoy It
Get A Whiff A This
ALSO INCLUDES BONUS TRACKS
DIGITALLY REMASTERED

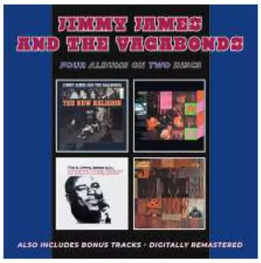
JUICY LUCY
Juicy Lucy
Lie Back And Enjoy It
Get A Whiff A This
plus bonus tracks
BGOCD1441

38 SPECIAL
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS ★ ROCK & ROLL STRATEGY
DIGITALLY REMASTERED

38 SPECIAL
Strength In Numbers
Rock & Roll Strategy
BGOCD1446


THE IVY LEAGUE
THREE ALBUMS ON TWO DISCS
ALSO INCLUDES EP AND BONUS TRACKS
DIGITALLY REMASTERED

THE IVY LEAGUE
This Is... / Sounds Of... / Tomorrow Is Another Day + EP and bonus tracks
BGOCD1439

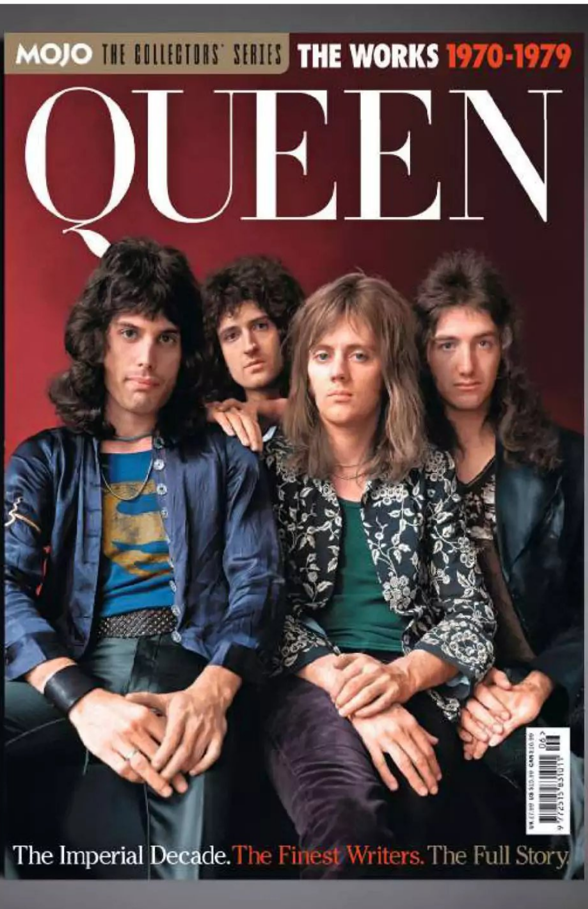

JIMMY JAMES AND THE VAGABONDS
FOUR ALBUMS ON TWO DISCS
ALSO INCLUDES BONUS TRACKS · DIGITALLY REMASTERED

JIMMY JAMES AND THE VAGABONDS
The New Religion / London Swings / This Is / Open Up Your Soul + bonus tracks
BGOCD1432

BGO RECORDS

All BGO Records new releases are available from Amazon and all good record shops or online at www.bgo-records.com
For a free BGO Records text catalogue listing and order form, please email mike@bgo-records.com or call **01284 724406**

BGO Records, 7 St Andrews Street North, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1TZ • Distributed in the UK by Proper Music


MOJO THE COLLECTORS' SERIES THE WORKS 1970-1979
QUEEN
The Imperial Decade. The Finest Writers. The Full Story.

QUEEN.
MOJO'S FINEST WRITERS.
THE FULL STORY.
IN TWO DELUXE VOLUMES.

AVAILABLE NOW!

Buy online at greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo-specials

Queen 1980-2021 out July 29, 2021

Joan Armatrading

SHE, HERSELF AND HER

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm busy rehearsing so I'm listening to my own stuff. If I'm sitting about relaxing with friends I'll play something classical – **Beethoven**, **Purcell**, **Vivaldi**, **Bach**, **Mozart**, you name 'em, I'm gonna like 'em.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

At the moment I'm really enjoying **Kanye West**'s *Jesus Is King*, in his religious phase. It's a great album, but I wouldn't say any album was my favourite of all time.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I can't remember the order, but I got a **Free** LP and the first **Led Zeppelin** album, I'd have been about 19. I loved Led Zeppelin, still do – great songs, fantastic playing, energy! But I can't remember [where from], I didn't go out buying records and I was quite late coming to things.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I don't want to be anyone but Joan, thank you. I don't wanna be a lion, a tiger, a tree, I'm very happy being who I am.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't. I don't sing around the house, unless I'm writing, seriously.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

You're asking the wrong person because I probably wouldn't play music on a Saturday! I'll be watching the television, some comedy programme like Taskmaster or You've Been Framed. You see, from young, when I started writing, writing was *it*. Writing the words, trying to get the emotion and expression, and feeling, I spent a lot of time doing that.

And your Sunday morning record?

Maybe that Kanye record.

Consequences is out now on BMG.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Danny Elfman

HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES!

What music are you currently grooving to?

Wow! What am I grooving to? That's *soooo* hard! I'm listening to a lot of heavy stuff. **Tool**'s *Fear Inoculum* is high up on my list. For some reason I've returned to a lot of **Portishead** and **Massive Attack** from the past. But as I'm in the middle of writing a cello concerto I'm also listening to a lot of **Shostakovich** and **Bartók** classical works and then mix in some *Moorish Music From Mauritania* by **Khalifa Ould Eide & Dimi Mint Abba** and *Sleepwalking Through The Mekong* by **Dengue Fever** and that might be it for this week. It's a mish-mosh and next week... who knows? A different brew.

Jacob Boll,

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

If push came to shove I'd have to choose **David Bowie**'s *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)*.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I'm not 100 per cent sure but it might have been *Revolver* from **The Beatles**. If that includes 7-inch singles, I'd have to go way back to **The Four Tops**' Reach Out I'll Be There. I haven't the foggiest idea what record store I'd have gone to when I was a kid. I just *hope* I paid for it!

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Oh God, that's the longest list ever. **Igor Stravinsky**, **Sergei Prokofiev**, Dmitri Shostakovich, **Duke Ellington**, **Cab Calloway**, **Philip Glass**, **Miles Davis**... shall I go on? **John Lennon**, **John Coltrane**, **David Byrne**, David Bowie, **Jimi Hendrix**, **Jimmy Page**, **Kurt Weill**, **Kurt Cobain**, **Stéphane Grappelli**, **Steve Reich**... this list can go on forever, so I'll stop here.

What do you sing in the shower?

Any **Freddie Mercury** song I can conjure up.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Radiohead's *The King Of Limbs*.

And your Sunday morning record?

Miles Davis's *Round About Midnight*.

Big Mess is released this month on Anti-/ Epitaph.

Faye Webster

ATLANTA INDIE-FOLKIE

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm listening to **Mei Ehara** a lot right now, like *a lot* a lot. I love her music, the instrumentation and her melodies are so fun to me and I see myself in her sometimes. She's definitely on repeat most of the time.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Hannah Cohen, *Welcome Home*, I have listened to this album so much that I get sensory nostalgia from it. Certain songs make me smell certain things from where I was or what I was doing at the first time when I was listening to it.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Asleep At The Wheel, *10*. All I remember is buying it with my family somewhere, maybe a spring break or something, when I was a kid. They were always one of my parents' favourite bands so I guess it just got passed on to me.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Patti Smith probably. Her mind is so beautiful and I like how she just sits and reads or writes at random places like she isn't Patti Smith or something. That's what I'm trying to be like.

> "Certain songs make me smell certain things."
> **FAYE WEBSTER**

What do you sing in the shower?

My boyfriend's songs because it's the only time that I can do it without him hearing...

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Soft Sounds From Another Planet by **Japanese Breakfast**. It's definitely a go-to for me and always puts me in a good mood.

And your Sunday morning record?

Blake Mills, *Mutable Set*. There's not a song on this record that's getting skipped. It's my favourite album to listen to, like to really listen to... it's so comforting and I find myself focusing on something different about the song every listen.

I Know I'm Funny haha is released this month on Secretly Canadian.

MOJO

Academic House,
24-28 Oval Road
London NW1 7DT
Tel: 020 7437 9011
Reader queries: mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk
Subscriber queries: bauer@subscription.co.uk
General e-mail: mojo@bauermedia.co.uk
Website: mojo4music.com

Editor
John Mulvey
Senior Editor
Danny Eccleston
Art Editor
Mark Wagstaff
Associate Editor (Production)
Geoff Brown
Associate Editor (Reviews)
Jenny Bulley
Associate Editor (News)
Ian Harrison
Deputy Art Editor
Del Gentleman
Picture Editor
Matt Turner
Senior Associate Editor
Andrew Male
Contributing Editors
Phil Alexander, Keith Cameron, Sylvie Simmons
For mojo4music.com contact
Danny Eccleston

Thanks for their help with this issue:
Keith Cameron, Ian Whent.

Among this month's contributors:
Martin Aston, John Aizlewood, Mark Blake, Mike Barnes, Glyn Brown, John Bungey, David Buckley, Keith Cameron, Stevie Chick, Andrew Collins, Andy Cowan, Bill DeMain, Tom Doyle, Daryl Easlea, Alison Fensterstock, David Fricke, Andy Fyfe, Pat Gilbert, David Hutcheon, Chris Ingham, Jim Irvin, Colin Irwin, David Katz, Dorian Lynskey, Andrew Male, James McNair, Andy Morris, Lucy O'Brien, Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, Andrew Perry, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, David Sheppard, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Ben Thompson, Kieron Tyler, Charles Waring, Lois Wilson, Stephen Worthy..

Among this month's photographers:
Cover: Alex Lake
Alec Byrne, David Carol, Dean Chalkley, Henry Diltz, Lynn Goldsmith, Jim Herrington, Roger Kisby, Bud Lee, Gered Mankowitz, Wendy McDougall, David Montgomery, Charles Moriarty, Paul Natkin, Michael Putland, Jennifer Rocholl, Christian Rose, Graham Trott, Peter Webb, Guy Webster

MOJO SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE
0185 8438884
For subscription or back issue queries contact
CDS Global on **Bauer@subscription.co.uk**
To access from outside the UK
Dial: +44 (0)185 8438884

Theories, rants, etc.

MOJO welcomes correspondence for publication.
E-mail to: mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk

ON APRIL 7, FRED DELLAR SUBMITTED his crossword for MOJO, as he had done every month for over 20 years. It was, as ever, a small masterpiece of cunning, playfulness and immense musical wisdom: a place where Earl Scruggs and Earl Sweatshirt could share a clue, where Bob Lind, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Ramsey Lewis and Anthrax all had a part to play, and Dusty Springfield was always welcome.

It has proved, though, to be Fred's final crossword. Sadly, this most trusted and beloved of MOJO stalwarts passed away on May 15, a fortnight before his 90th birthday. As so many of you will know, Fred has been a critical part of MOJO for most of our existence: curator of Time Machine, infallible fount of knowledge on the Ask Fred page, a thoughtful and generous journalist who always carried his learning lightly. Before MOJO, Fred was an equally invaluable presence in many other fine music mags, and we've detailed his full extraordinary career on page 113, where his crossword would normally reside. I first encountered him in the early '90s at NME, pottering discreetly among the photo files, researching his Fred Fact column. Music scholars can sometimes be intimidating figures, but Fred was notable for his kindness and insight as well as his expertise. Early in my career, he intuited the music I might like and brought me a tape of David Ackles' first album. He was, of course, uncannily correct.

We'll miss Fred hugely, and we're sure you all will, too. But we also hope we've learned from him how to share our enthusiasms, how to pack every MOJO full of information about an eclectic world of music, articulated with an easy warmth that's always inclusive, and never elitist. To honour Fred, we can aspire to nothing greater.

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Are you sure you're playing with the right side?

While the Ivy Rooms might have been the first gig My Bloody Valentine played with their name on the bill [as captioned in MOJO 331], it wasn't their first gig. A mate of mine, Frank – I think, at the time, fancying himself the next Paul McGuinness – started a series of concerts in the basement of the North Star Hotel in Dublin earlier that year. The first night, the first band on was MBV. It might have been nerves, but they didn't establish much eye contact with the largely punk audience, so my mate took a little bit of piss by placing the telephone directory at the toe of singer David Conway's forward winklepicker: shoegazing before there was shoegaze. As the nerd playing audio engineer for the evening, I remember being fascinated by Kevin Shields' use of tape echo to create other-worldly soundscapes.

A few weeks later, me, Frank, and one of the other bands that evening squeezed into my mum's Ford Fiesta to spend a Saturday afternoon in Kevin's parents' converted garage, recording a demo on his 4-track cassette recorder. Prompted by Kevin, as I remember it, Frank even ended up adding a layer of mono-synth lines for a bit more texture in the mix. This remains my claim-to-fame anecdote, trotted out when mixing with rock cognoscenti. Heady days.

Dave Hegarty, Tübingen, Germany

Are you going to tell us who you work for?

As a full-on MOJO reader since Issue 1, I now habitually expect your features to uncover deep back stories, and the McCartney/*Ram* article [MOJO 331] did not disappoint. Above all, I was impressed to see that Linda got at least a bit of a nod for urging a depressed Paul to record the *Ram* album. I expect there's even more to that story, and there have got be scores of similar stories about the heroic, devoted women behind the great men of music (hello Yoko!). Dear departed Fred Dellar (sending a tearful RIP from a friend and fan) would have jumped on such a theme.

Morgan Fisher, Mott The Hoople

You can't put a price on integrity

I have just read the article on the Redskins [MOJO 332], not before time as they have never gained the praise they're due, and surely they're more relevant than ever. I was lucky to have seen them a few times, though the only gigs I remember are York Racecourse and supporting The Clash on the Out Of Control tour in Brixton. They definitely sang like The Supremes! In 2019, I had Billy Bragg sign one of his books and asked him to write "stop, strike, unionise" as the dedication. I'm a nurse, it felt appropriate. Billy said, "The Redskins, great band, bloody difficult to tour with."

Dave Portch, Exeter

The first thing you should know about us is that we have people everywhere

Like many other subscribers I've been making do with curating my record collection during lockdown whilst waiting for the return of live music. Then in MOJO 332's letters I saw a tribute to Poco's Rusty Young, in which Clive Goodyer recalled going to Birmingham Hippodrome with his older brother in 1975 to see America and Poco, which coincidentally was my first ever gig. Not having older siblings, and having friends only into the usual Sab/Zep/ELP/Yes, that Tuesday night after school I took the bus into town on my own and thus started a live musical odyssey, although I had to wait another few months until seeing a past-their-best Flying Burrito Brothers at the Town Hall.

Sleater-Kinney, The Murder Capital and Elvis Costello were the last three gigs I went to, and perhaps together with Poco they are a good representation of the wide range of artists that MOJO does a great job of keeping us all in touch with. I've got a couple of dozen rearranged gigs pencilled in for the autumn so let's hope that they can finally go ahead. See you at the rock show.

Ashley Jones, North Wales

You just cost me quite a bit of money, darling

Retirement and Covid have given me time to play and purchase more records. MOJO 329 introduced me to Lonnie Holley and I was mesmerised with his story. Thanks to that, I've added his *Just Before Music* and *National Freedom* LPs to my collection. Thank you, MOJO for bringing to light so many artists who deserve wider recognition.

Michael Carson, Tucson Arizona

His MI6 file says he's difficult to control

Your Time Machine piece [MOJO 331] referred to "thrusting young record executive" Richard Branson and was a reminder that Branson's success with Mike Oldfield's opus was, effectively, the launch pad of his Virgin empire and billionaire status. In the 1990s, while working at BBC Radio Derby, I interviewed Derby-born Kevin Coyne and we eventually touched on his early years at Virgin. Kevin told me that shortly after being signed by Virgin, he was asked to meet Branson on his house-boat. He told Kevin that he had concerns about the *Tubular Bells* recordings going on at Oxford Manor. "He was worried about the fact that it was an all-instrumental album," recalled Kevin. "He said 'I don't think this is going to work', and so he asked me to go up to the Manor to see if I could put some lyrics to it. So I trooped off to Oxford to meet this Oldfield fellow and to listen to his album. I hated it. I walked away thinking, I want nothing to do with this. Good job, really. Look how *Tubular Bells* turned out." Kevin always struck me as a guy of utter sincerity. Maybe Mike Oldfield recalls this episode?

Ashley Franklin, Milford, Derbyshire

Regimes change once a week around here

Loved your Paul Weller edition [MOJO 331]. Made me regret even more selling my original Jam LPs when CDs arrived, so it got me thinking: Weller has been amazingly consistent over many years. I went back to *Stanley Road* and wondered where it featured in MOJO's Albums of 1995… I checked. It didn't. How about a self-reflective feature on the best albums that never made the MOJO Top 50 over the years? Could dig out some real gems. Thanks, as ever, for being amazing.

Roger Bratchell

You only have one shot. Make it count.

I was very pleased to see Joni on the cover of MOJO 332 – and enjoyed your excellent 50th Anniversary celebration of *Blue*, which is surely one of the most truly beautiful albums ever recorded. 1971 does appear to be a good vintage, with other classics such as *Who's Next*, *Surf's Up*, *Led Zeppelin IV* and *Hunky Dory*. And whilst we're getting all nostalgic, the letter quotes this month appear to be from Almost Famous… and there's a great soundtrack to the early '70s! Keep up the great work.

Stephen Gregory, Altrincham

SAVE MONEY ON NEWSSTAND PRICES!

AND GET MOJO DELIVERED FREE TO YOUR DOOR WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!

SUBSCRIBE RIGHT NOW!
And you'll get MOJO delivered direct to your door. See page 24 for full details…

MOJO
MOJO
INTO TOMORROW
the BLACK KEYS
MOJO
You Gotta Move

MOJO MAKES A GREAT GIFT!!!

SAVE £££ OFF COVER PRICE!

Head of Magazine Media
Clare Chamberlain
MD Bauer Media Advertising
Simon Kilby
Head Of Magazine Brands
Anu Short
Brand Director Joel Stephan
Sales Operations Co-ordinator
Thomas Ward
Regional Advertising Katie Kendall
Classified Sales Executive
Max Garwood
Classified Sales Manager Ben Peck
Inserts Manager Simon Buckenham
Production Manager
Carl Lawrence
Sales Operations Executive, BMA Finance Helen Mear

President, Bauer Media Publishing
Rob Munro-Hall
EA to President Vicky Meadows
CEO of Bauer Publishing UK
Chris Duncan
Chief Financial Officer, Bauer Magazine Media Lisa Hayden
EA to CEO and CFO Stacey Thomas
Group MD Women's Mass & Celebrity, Premium and Entertainment
Helen Morris
Publisher, Premium and Entertainment
Lauren Holleyoake
PA to Group MD and Publisher
Elisha Thomas
Commercial Marketing Director
Liz Martin
Managing Editor Linda Steventon
MOJO CD and Honours Creative Director Dave Henderson
Senior Events Producer
Marguerite Peck
Senior Business Analyst
Tracey Pickering
Marketing Manager Philippa Turner
Direct Marketing Manager Julie Spires
Direct Marketing Executive
Raheema Rahim
Communications Director Jess Blake

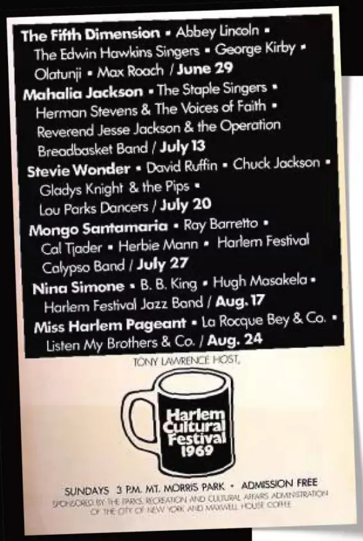
Printing: William Gibbons
MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT. VAT no 918 5617 01.
The US annual subscription price is $114.98. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.
Subscription records are maintained at H Bauer, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF, United Kingdom.
Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.
For subscription or back issue queries, please contact CDS Global on Bauer@subscription.co.uk Phone from the UK on 01858 43 8884. Phone from overseas on +44 (0)1858 43 8884. For enquires on overseas newsstand sales e-mail Paul.Maher@seymour.co.uk
© All material published is copyright of H Bauer Publishing. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the prior permission of the publisher. MOJO accepts no responsibility for any unsolicited material.
For syndication enquiries go to: syndication@bauermedia.co.uk
H Bauer Publishing is authorised and regulated by the FCA (Ref No. 845898) and (Ref No. 710067)
To find out more about where to buy MOJO, contact Frontline Ltd, at 1st Floor, Stuart House, St Johns Street, Peterborough PE1 5DD. Tel: 01733 555161.

COMPLAINTS: H Bauer Publishing is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (www.ipso.co.uk) and endeavours to respond to and resolve your concerns quickly.
Our Editorial Complaints Policy (including full details of how to contact us about editorial complaints and IPSO's contact details) can be found at www.bauermediacomplaints.co.uk. Our e mail address for editorial complaints covered by the Editorial Complaints Policy is complaints@bauermedia.co.uk.

BAUER
abc
recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.
ipso. Regulated

WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**



The Fifth Dimension • Abbey Lincoln • The Edwin Hawkins Singers • George Kirby • Olatunji • Max Roach / **June 29**
Mahalia Jackson • The Staple Singers • Herman Stevens & The Voices of Faith • Reverend Jesse Jackson & the Operation Breadbasket Band / **July 13**
Stevie Wonder • David Ruffin • Chuck Jackson • Gladys Knight & the Pips • Lou Parks Dancers / **July 20**
Mongo Santamaria • Ray Barretto • Cal Tjader • Herbie Mann • Harlem Festival Calypso Band / **July 27**
Nina Simone • B. B. King • Hugh Masakela • Harlem Festival Jazz Band / **Aug. 17**
Miss Harlem Pageant • La Rocque Bey & Co. • Listen My Brothers & Co. / **Aug. 24**

TONY LAWRENCE HOST.

Harlem Cultural Festival 1969

SUNDAYS 3 P.M. MT. MORRIS PARK • ADMISSION FREE
SPONSORED BY THE PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK AND MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE

Rage In Harlem

Directed by Questlove, Summer Of Soul exposes the lost music revolution of summer '69.

WHEN PRODUCERS Robert Fyvolent and David Dinerstein approached Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson in 2017 to discuss the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, he found it hard to believe that he had never heard of an event which starred Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, Gladys Knight and Sly And The Family Stone, among others.

"I thought they were trying to pull a fast one on me," recalls the Roots drummer, Tonight Show bandleader and walking encyclopaedia of music. "I was like, 'There's no way you're telling me that 300,000 people witnessed this and not one person knows this story.'"

Having only directed one music video, he then deliberated whether he could take on the responsibility of turning those 40 reels of forgotten black history into a movie.

"I have what it takes to sit in the audience and tell my date, Ah, they got that wrong. But do I have what it takes to tell the story?" he says. "You've got one chance to really get it right. I made the decision to create the film that I would actually want to see." That film is Summer Of Soul (…Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised), which has already won the Grand Jury prize and Audience award at Sundance.

The festival took place in Mount Morris Park over six weekends in the summer of Woodstock and Apollo 11. The brainchild of a formidable promoter named Tony Lawrence ("sort of like the black Bill Graham," says Questlove), it had the backing of New York's liberal mayor John Lindsay, who thought it would soothe race relations the year after Martin Luther King's murder.

Producer Hal Tulchin filmed the first five weekends (in week six the film crew was filming the pilot of Sesame Street) and pitched it to broadcasters as "Black Woodstock", but nobody would bite. Just before the launch of Soul Train and the blaxploitation boom, blackness was barely an idea, let alone a market. Woodstock, Monterey and Wattstax live on through film but Harlem went unseen and unremembered.

"Mainstream dollars meant white dollars," Questlove says. "Soul Train was the paradigm shift for black entertainment but this film should have been first out of the gate."

Questlove ran the footage on a constant loop for months, looking for "goosebump moments", but what makes Summer Of Soul extraordinary is the use of archive clips and talking heads to connect the music to the times: the Black Panthers, the heroin epidemic, Afrocentrism, the apartheid struggle, and even the moon landing, which coincided with Wonder's set and left festivalgoers refreshingly unimpressed.

"It was such a pivotal year," Questlove says. "Black people were embracing the parts of ourselves that we were formerly ashamed of. The historian in me wanted to present this in the proper context. The circumstances that caused this concert to happen in the first place are happening to us in real time right now. Even if you don't relate to the music, you're relating to the struggle."

It's hard to imagine any viewer not relating to Wonder's giddy drum solo, Simone's hair-raising call for revolution or Mahalia Jackson's and Mavis Staples' staggering gospel tribute to Dr King. Questlove says that he came to love camera number four, which captured scenes of delight and self-expression in the crowd that were every bit as joyful as what was happening on stage. Thanks to Summer Of Soul, they too are finally part of the historical record.

Dorian Lynskey

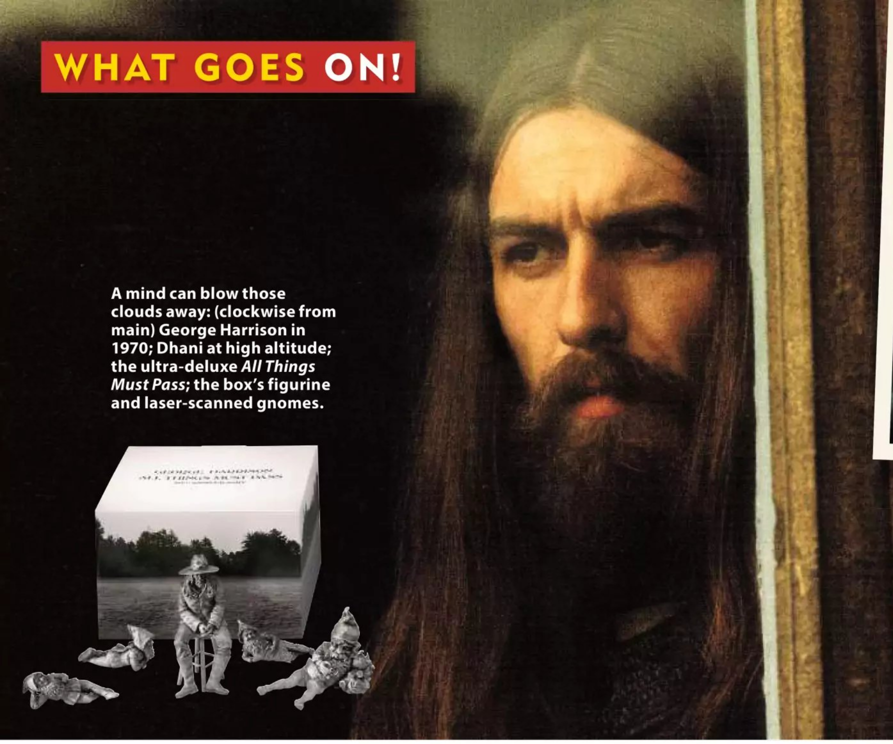
> "I thought they were trying to pull a fast one on me."
> **QUESTLOVE**

Summer Of Soul (…Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised) is released in theatres and on Hulu on July 2.

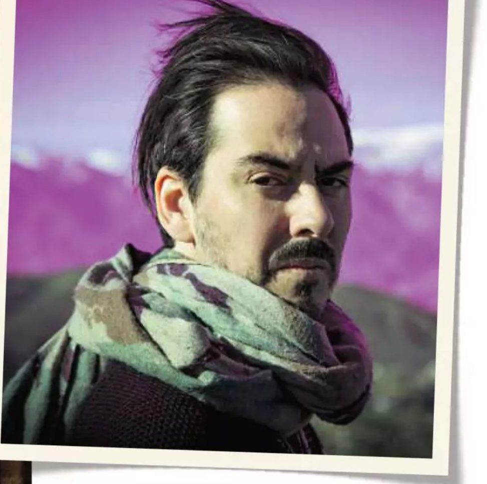
Getty (2), Alamy, Searchlight Pictures

Harlem Cultural Festival 1969

Questlove (above) and Summer Of Soul goosebump moments with Sly Stone (far left) The 5th Dimension and the ecstatic audience; (inset top) the bill, missing late addition Sly's June 29 show.



A mind can blow those clouds away: (clockwise from main) George Harrison in 1970; Dhani at high altitude; the ultra-deluxe *All Things Must Pass*; the box's figurine and laser-scanned gnomes.



GEORGE HARRISON'S *ALL THINGS MUST PASS*, GOES UBER-DELUXE (WITH GNOMES)

BACK IN JANUARY 2001, only 10 months before his death, George Harrison expressed his ongoing dissatisfaction with the "big production" of *All Things Must Pass* in the linernotes for the album's 30th anniversary reissue: "It was difficult to resist remixing every track," he noted. Now, for the upcoming 50th anniversary motherlode edition of his already expansive 1970 album (pandemic-delayed and due in August), some tasteful retrofitting has been applied.

"My dad was not a fan of reverb," Dhani Harrison tells MOJO, on the phone from his family's Friar Park estate in Henley-on-Thames, explaining that the new, from-the-ground-up mixes of the landmark triple album involved painstaking audio restoration and a foregrounding of his father's vocals, somewhat stripping back Phil Spector's layers of effects. "It's like restoring a painting," Harrison adds. "We're so careful. Every stage has been A/B'ed [comparing the new and earlier versions] along with the original. When you hear it, it's just mindblowing."

The new Super Deluxe *All Things Must Pass* comprises 70 tracks over five CDs or eight LPs, reclaiming the solo acoustic demos from the hands of the bootleggers. Dhani recalls his dad having a significant conversation with Bob Dylan regarding outtake curation: "I remember him talking back in the '90s to Bob and saying, 'You've just got to release all your bootlegs. Make it sound great and own it. Take it back.' We wanted to make it so good that there's no way you could ever want to bootleg these ever again."

From the 30 included demos (26 previously unreleased), Dhani singles out the whimsical groover Cosmic Empire, along with the mantra-like Dehra Dun, while other highlights include a different version of Sour Milk Sea from the Esher sketch for *The White Album* and a Sun Records-style slapback rocker titled Going Down To Golders Green.

Harrison and engineer Paul Hicks (also responsible for recent sonic restorations for The Beatles, the Lennon estate and The Rolling Stones) together mixed a staggering 110 tracks, before making the final selection. Of what Dhani calls the preliminary "small band" versions of *ATMP* songs (featuring Ringo on drums and Klaus Voormann on bass), he admits that the mixing of an alternate I'd Have You Anytime was an affecting moment.

"It broke my heart," he says. "I just started sobbing. Paul looked at me and said, 'OK, so we're *doing* it then.' There was no question as to whether or not this was the right way to go because it's just so powerful. Ultimately, everything had to be emotional."

> "My dad was not a fan of reverb."
> **DHANI HARRISON**

Meanwhile, an Über Deluxe Edition of the album, limited to 3,000, will be housed in a wooden crate along with Rudraksha prayer beads, a seven-inch-tall figurine of George and $^{1}/_{12}$th-scale laser-scanned gnomes as featured on the original cover, and a bookmark cut from a pine tree on the Harrison estate.

"You actually get a piece of Friar Park history," Dhani enthuses of the crate edition, modelled on a Victorian ale chest. "I wanted it to be like a time capsule. It looks like it's lasted 100 years and will last another 100 years."

Tom Doyle

All Things Must Pass 50th Anniversary Edition will be available in various formats via Capitol/UMe on August 6.

GIMME FIVE... MUSICAL CASH-INS

The Good Earth
Swinging London
(SAGA, 1968)

Before hippy wigs in Woolies, a bilious Carnaby Street knock-off on Marcel Rodd's attitude-over-budget label provides campery and naffness galore. The Good Earth later birthed Mungo Jerry, but calling the last tune Unwashed, Unwanted was tempting fate.

Various
Jack The Tab
(CASTALIA RECORDINGS, 1988)

Hedging its bets with the subtitle "Original UK Acid Dance Freakbeats," naughty Genesis P-Orridge and Richard Norris present their idea of acid house (trippy voice samples, funky breakbeats) without, it seems, having heard any actual acid house.

The Charlie Parkas
The Ballad Of Robin Hood
(PARANOID PLASTICS, 1980)

Complete with bogus 2-Tone sleeve, this ska version of the TV theme sung by ex-Cricklewood Palais star Dick James was actually by Albertos Y Lost Trios Paranoias singing in questionable accents. John Peel was a fan.

Leda
Welcome To Joyland
(METRONOME, 1978)

There were many disco cash-in records, but how many were made by ex-Tangerine Dreamer Peter Baumann, undercover and under the influence of Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder? It has its period appeal, but ennui sets in with Caroussel.

The Freak Scene
Psychedelic Psoul
(COLUMBIA, 1967)

LSD-ploitation or pre-cognition? Rusty Evans, who was also behind '66's *Psychedelic Moods* by The Deep, started out as a rockabilly but by the Summer of Love was turned on to fuzz, weird effects and titles like Mind Bender. Beware contact highs.

Barry Feinstein, Josh Giroux

ANGLO HANNAH MANAGEMENT AND SJM CONCERTS PRESENTS

Madness

The Ladykillers Tour

With Very Fragrant Guests

SQUEEZE

DECEMBER 2021

Thu 02 **ABERDEEN** P&J Arena
Fri 03 **GLASGOW** The SSE Hydro
Sat 04 **SHEFFIELD** Arena
SOLD OUT **BOURNEMOUTH** B.I.C
SOLD OUT **BRIGHTON** Centre
Thu 09 **LIVERPOOL** M&S Bank Arena
Fri 10 **LEEDS** First Direct Arena
Sat 11 **MANCHESTER** AO Arena
Mon 13 **CARDIFF** Motorpoint Arena
Tue 14 **NOTTINGHAM** Motorpoint Arena
Thu 16 **NEWCASTLE** Utilita Arena
Fri 17 **BIRMINGHAM** Utilita Arena
Sat 18 **LONDON** The O2 Arena

EXTRA DATE ADDED!
Mon 20 **LONDON** The SSE Arena, Wembley

GIGSANDTOURS.COM - TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
MADNESS.CO.UK

SJM CONCERTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH PARADIGM PRESENTS

GARY NUMAN

APRIL 2022

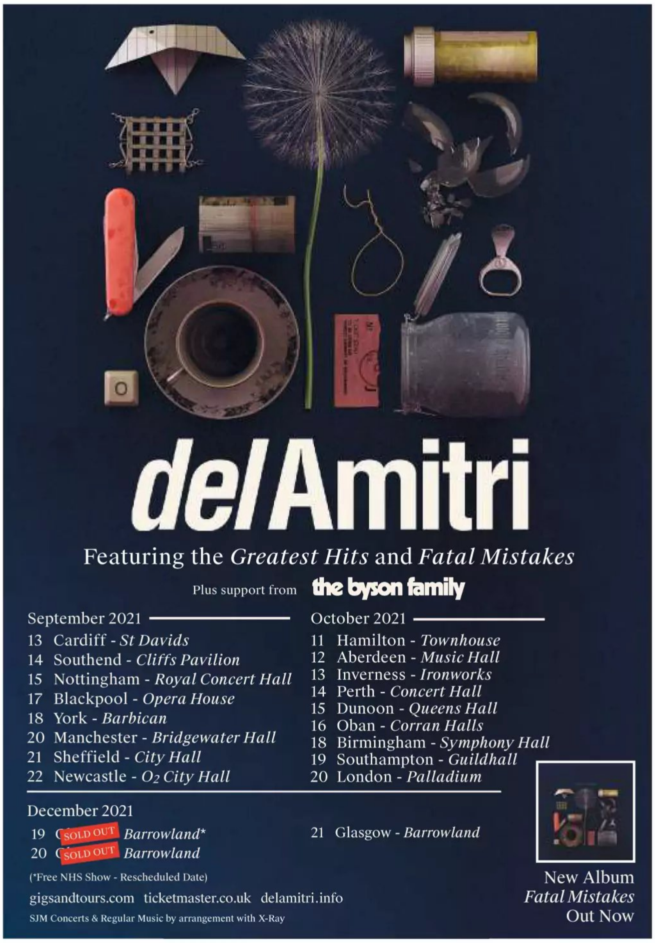
THU 28 CARDIFF UNIVERSITY GREAT HALL
SAT 30 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY

MAY 2022

SUN 01 BRIGHTON CENTRE
MON 02 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
THU 05 BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY
FRI 06 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
MON 09 EDINBURGH CORN EXCHANGE
TUE 10 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
WED 11 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
THU 12 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
SAT 14 NORTHAMPTON DERNGATE
SUN 15 NORWICH UEA
MON 16 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
WED 18 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
FRI 20 SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY

SATURDAY 07 MAY 2022
LONDON
THE SSE ARENA WEMBLEY

GIGSANDTOURS.COM / TICKETMASTER.CO.UK



del Amitri

Featuring the *Greatest Hits* and *Fatal Mistakes*

Plus support from **the byson family**

September 2021

13 Cardiff - *St Davids*
14 Southend - *Cliffs Pavilion*
15 Nottingham - *Royal Concert Hall*
17 Blackpool - *Opera House*
18 York - *Barbican*
20 Manchester - *Bridgewater Hall*
21 Sheffield - *City Hall*
22 Newcastle - *O2 City Hall*

October 2021

11 Hamilton - *Townhouse*
12 Aberdeen - *Music Hall*
13 Inverness - *Ironworks*
14 Perth - *Concert Hall*
15 Dunoon - *Queens Hall*
16 Oban - *Corran Halls*
18 Birmingham - *Symphony Hall*
19 Southampton - *Guildhall*
20 London - *Palladium*

December 2021

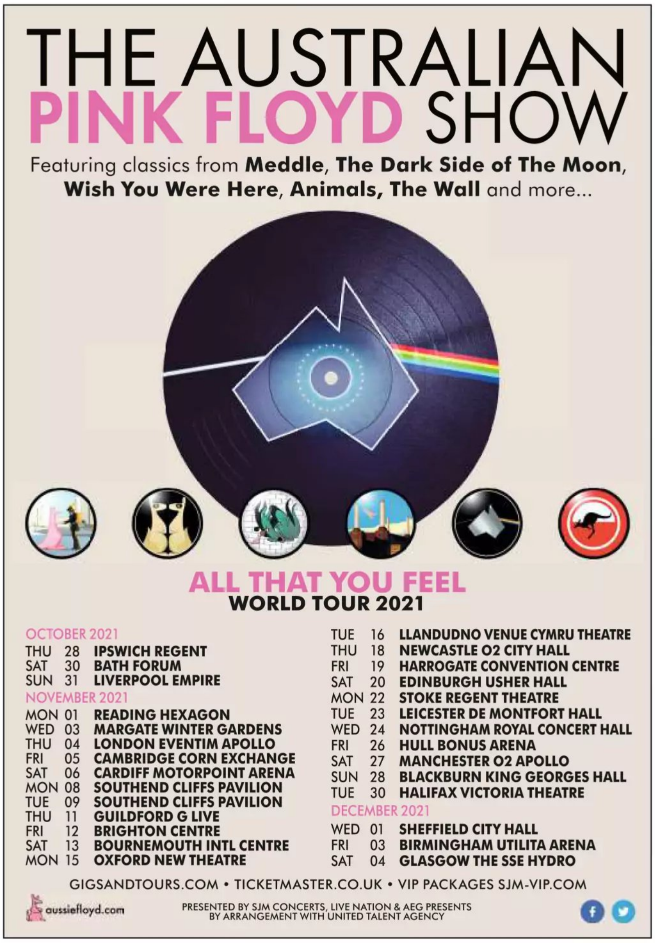
19 SOLD OUT *Barrowland**
20 SOLD OUT *Barrowland*
21 Glasgow - *Barrowland*

(*Free NHS Show - Rescheduled Date)

gigsandtours.com ticketmaster.co.uk delamitri.info

SJM Concerts & Regular Music by arrangement with X-Ray

New Album
Fatal Mistakes
Out Now



THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW

Featuring classics from **Meddle**, **The Dark Side of The Moon**, **Wish You Were Here**, **Animals**, **The Wall** and more...

ALL THAT YOU FEEL
WORLD TOUR 2021

OCTOBER 2021

THU 28 **IPSWICH REGENT**
SAT 30 **BATH FORUM**
SUN 31 **LIVERPOOL EMPIRE**

NOVEMBER 2021

MON 01 **READING HEXAGON**
WED 03 **MARGATE WINTER GARDENS**
THU 04 **LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO**
FRI 05 **CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE**
SAT 06 **CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA**
MON 08 **SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION**
TUE 09 **SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION**
THU 11 **GUILDFORD G LIVE**
FRI 12 **BRIGHTON CENTRE**
SAT 13 **BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE**
MON 15 **OXFORD NEW THEATRE**
TUE 16 **LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU THEATRE**
THU 18 **NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL**
FRI 19 **HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE**
SAT 20 **EDINBURGH USHER HALL**
MON 22 **STOKE REGENT THEATRE**
TUE 23 **LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL**
WED 24 **NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL**
FRI 26 **HULL BONUS ARENA**
SAT 27 **MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO**
SUN 28 **BLACKBURN KING GEORGES HALL**
TUE 30 **HALIFAX VICTORIA THEATRE**

DECEMBER 2021

WED 01 **SHEFFIELD CITY HALL**
FRI 03 **BIRMINGHAM UTILITA ARENA**
SAT 04 **GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO**

GIGSANDTOURS.COM • TICKETMASTER.CO.UK • VIP PACKAGES SJM-VIP.COM

aussiefloyd.com

PRESENTED BY SJM CONCERTS, LIVE NATION & AEG PRESENTS
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY

Still blowing a storm: The Stranglers' JJ Burnel stays in tune; (inset) the late Dave Greenfield.

FACT SHEET

Title: *Dark Matters*

Due: September

Songs: If Something's Gonna Kill Me (It Might As Well Be Love) / And If You Should See Dave… / The Lines / Payday / The Last Men On The Moon / White Stallion

The Buzz: "I was wiped out for a couple of weeks after Dave died but then it was, we've got this body of work and we've got to complete it. So we did. I think it'll be a good testament to him and The Stranglers." *JJ Burnel*

> "If it's the last one, so be it."
> **JJ BURNEL**

THE STRANGLERS SAY FAREWELL TO DAVE GREENFIELD WITH *DARK MATTERS*

"CAN YOU hear me?" says Stranglers bassist JJ Burnel from his home in the south of France. "I'm outside and the mistral is blowing…" He should be in the UK to put the finishing touches to The Stranglers' 18th LP *Dark Matters*, but a positive coronavirus test forced a U-turn en route to the ferry in early May. "I had no symptoms," he says. "Was it a false positive? Was I immune? Or just god-like, ha ha!"

As is common in The Stranglers' world, levity touches on more serious matters. Dave Greenfield, the group's keyboardist since 1975, played on eight of the 11 songs before succumbing to Covid on May 3, 2020.

The recording sessions, which started in late 2018 and continued over the next six months, were for the band's first album since 2012's *Giants*. They worked at Charlton Farm, their HQ of 20 years near Bath, Somerset, with producer and Wurzels alumnus Louie Nicastro. "We started writing some of the material nearly 10 years ago," says JJ. "I had about 300 ideas. In the last three or four years we started trying to make sense of them. We used to really enjoy meeting up and rehearsing late throughout the night. We were a band who enjoyed each other's company.

"Dave'd come in with his little bag and get very drunk and just play," he continues, "but he was entirely sober on the final recordings. He was an exceptional musician. When you've known and loved someone for 45 years… I think we had four rows in that time. I mean, he was really *out there*, and recently we realised why that was, he was high functioning Asperger's. Of course, none of us knew, when we said goodbye to him, it would be the last time. But we managed to get him in there, before he broke on through to the other side."

Though he was "wiped out" when Greenfield passed, finishing the record was, he says, "the first priority, and if it's the last one, so be it." The final three tracks made without Greenfield include lead track And If You Should See Dave…, which was recorded remotely between Charlton Farm, southern France and guitarist/co-vocalist Baz Warne's home in Wearside. A retro-West Coast farewell, its line "this is where your solo would go" is intensely poignant.

MOJO also asks after retired Stranglers drummer Jet Black. "Jet's got an opinion on everything we do, and we speak often," says JJ. "He's still in the background – *éminence grise*, as we say in France, he he!"

Elsewhere, the album shows a broad variety of styles, from classic Stranglers growl to synth pop and dance rock: subjects touch upon the Arab Spring, dreams of space, nemesis and retribution, and more. "I don't just want to talk about love and arses," says JJ.

But will this be the last Stranglers album? "I'm not so sure," says the man who still has to record one of the LP's tracks in French and Japanese. "I'm on a bit of a creative roll, and we've still got a lot to prove to ourselves. But we can't wait another 10 years."

They'll also be getting back on the road, having recruited an as-yet unnamed new keysman from a crack Stranglers tribute act. "He's an absolute disciple of Dave, so he'll be note perfect," says JJ. "We'll be playing a lot of the pieces Dave embellished and elevated. It's a fucking big empty space there, but, yeah…"

Ian Harrison

ALSO WORKING

…on receiving the eighth Woody Guthrie Prize in May, **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN** spoke of his debt to the folk giant and revealed, "We have a record coming out soon that's set largely in the West" …"beats are rollin'" say **THE PRODIGY** (right) of their new LP …**Ronald Isley** has been working with **DR DRE**. It's expected to be part of Dre's long-awaited concept epic *Detox*, which was first announced on 2002 and was cancelled before rising again; other voices that've been linked to the project include **Snoop Dogg**, **Eminem** and **Jay-Z** …**THE CULT** are continuing to work with **Tom Dalgety** on their new LP. "We've been digging away at that for the last year and a half," guitarist **Billy Duffy** told the Tone-Talk guitar channel. "The philosophy in the Cult camp really is about quality not quantity… we're well, well into the process." He added he'd also played on new album *SNAFU* by Sex Pistol **Paul Cook**'s group **THE PROFESSIONALS** …**Duffy**'s old pal **JOHNNY MARR** has also suggested he's working on his fourth LP …**FONTAINES D.C.**'s representative could neither confirm nor deny that their new album will feature disco influences…

HAWKWIND's new sleep-themed LP *Somnia* arrives in September, investigating "sleepless paranoia, strange encounters, fever dreams and meditation" … **Björn Ulvaeus** told Melbourne's Herald Sun that **ABBA** (left) would definitely release five new songs this year. "The four of us stand in the studio for the first time in 40 years and there's just something in knowing what we've been through…"

Getty (4)

BIG BIG TRAIN

THE COMMON GROUND TOUR

MARCH 2022

TUE 15 **YORK** BARBICAN
WED 16 **CAMBRIDGE** CORN EXCHANGE
FRI 18 **BIRMINGHAM** SYMPHONY HALL
SAT 19 **BATH** FORUM
MON 21 **GLASGOW** ROYAL CONCERT HALL
TUE 22 **MANCHESTER** BRIDGEWATER HALL
WED 23 **LONDON** PALLADIUM

MYTICKET.CO.UK BIGBIGTRAIN.COM

NEW ALBUM 'COMMON GROUND' OUT 30TH JULY ON ENGLISH ELECTRIC

A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY

---

marillion

the light at the end of the tunnel tour

NOVEMBER 2021

SUN 14 HULL CITY HALL
MON 15 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
WED 17 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
THU 18 MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL
SAT 20 CAMBR SOLD OUT N EXCHANGE
SUN 21 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
TUE 23 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
WED 24 BATH FORUM
FRI 26 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH
SAT 27 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH

MYTICKET.CO.UK | MARILLION.COM

A KILIMANJARO & KNOWMOREPROMOTIONS PRESENTATION

STEVE HACKETT
GENESIS REVISITED

SECONDS OUT + *MORE!* UK 2021 TOUR

SEPTEMBER 2021
10 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
11 LIVER SOLD OUT HILHARMONIC
12 STOKE VICTORIA HALL
14 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
15 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
17 CARD SOLD OUT AVID'S HALL
18 BASIN SOLD OUT E THE ANVIL
20 LOND SOLD OUT LADIUM
21 LOND SOLD OUT LADIUM
22 LONDON PALLADIUM
24 MANCHESTER O$_2$ APOLLO
25 EDINBURGH PLAYHOUSE
27 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
28 DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
30 SCUNTHORPE THE BATHS HALL

OCTOBER 2021
01 BRADFORD ST GEORGE'S HALL
02 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
04 CROYDON FAIRFIELD HALLS
05 GUILI SOLD OUT LIVE
07 BRIGHTON DOME
08 POOLE LIGHTHOUSE
09 BEXH SOLD OUT A WARR PAVILION
11 SOUTHAMPTON MAYFLOWER
12 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
14 CARLISLE THE SANDS CENTRE
15 STOCKTON GLOBE
16 NEWCASTLE O$_2$ CITY HALL
18 AYLESBURY FRIARS WATERSIDE
19 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
21 PETERBOROUGH CRESSET
22 HARROGATE ROYAL HALL

MYTICKET.CO.UK | HACKETTSONGS.COM

A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO

ROCK'N'ROLL CONFIDENTIAL

Jackson Browne, not a pretender: "I knew nothing before, I know nothing now."

JACKSON BROWNE

The **Laurel Canyon laureate** talks protest, golden toilets and cocaine.

FOR SOMEONE whose music is regularly imbued with a sense of melancholia, MOJO finds Jackson Browne to be remarkably chirpy, recalling a London promotional visit in another century when publicist Derek Taylor dragged him in to watch a sweary Sex Pistols rampaging at Bill Grundy on live TV. "Pretty funny," he says, "a harbinger of things to come." Originally emerging as the archetypal voice of California in tandem with the Eagles, these days he's also an ecological campaigner and political activist who sued the Republican Party (and won) when John McCain used his song Running On Empty in his 2008 presidential bid.

The title track of your new album, *Downhill From Everywhere*, offers a depressed view of the world.

How could you not have a depressed view of the world? The title resonates with the world generally, but it's also about the health of the ocean, which is downhill from everywhere and is the repository of all humanity's activities.

When did you start taking a stand on politics? Your earlier work was more personal than political.

I was always drawn to political activism. I grew up in the civil rights era. I demonstrated and was active as a teenager and was involved before I was able to write anything political. But, as my friend Steven Van Zandt says, what's more personal than your political?

You lived through some crazy times of course – all the excesses of '70s LA...

Do people no longer take drugs or get caught up in excess? There is nothing more excessive than celebrity life in the USA. It did seem to me that was to be avoided and I tried to give fame a wide berth. The degree materialism has prevailed seems to have vanquished higher ideals. There's no place you can escape what's happening in the ecological and political realms, symbolised by the golden toilet at Trump Towers. Not that much has changed since the '60s and '70s, but all through history people have tried to create social change. It's just that now, time is running out.

Do you look back on your work with satisfaction?

I reflect more on the low points! I made a lot of mistakes, but life is for learning. There was a period of about 10 years when I was exhausted. I thought I was full of energy… I was certainly full of cocaine.

> "Do people no longer take drugs?"
> JACKSON BROWNE

BROWNE STUDIES

Jackson's Top 5 tracks

1. **Marvin Gaye** *What's Going On* (TAMLA, 1971)
2. **The Beach Boys** *God Only Knows* (CAPITOL, 1966)
3. **Bob Dylan** *Desolation Row* (COLUMBIA, 1965)
4. **Marc Cohn** *Olana* (ATLANTIC, 1998)
5. **Little Feat** *Rock And Roll Doctor* (WARNER BROS, 1974)

You've always worn your heart on your sleeve in song. What was the impact on you when your wife [model Phyllis Major] died in 1976?

It happened in the middle of making *The Pretender*. I stopped for a while. I finished Sleep's Dark And Silent Gate after she died, and it gave shading to the rest of the record. Songs take on resonances of things that have happened since they've been written. *The Pretender* is not about my wife's suicide, but songs I'd written before mysteriously became more about that. I wrote For A Dancer for someone else who died and that was on the album before *The Pretender* [1974's *Late For The Sky*]. I wrote it living in a house with her [Phyllis Major] and our child and gradually the song became about her. That's how songs work. They migrate into other parts of your life and other experiences. Someone said they played [1993's] Sky Blue And Black at their wedding, they said "that's our song". I said "Really?" It's a break-up song. People hear what they want to.

You had quite a feud with Joni Mitchell after your wife died – did you ever bury the hatchet?

No!

What have you learned?

That life is longer than you think it is and is full of surprises. I basically know nothing. I knew nothing before and I know nothing now. I started to write a song with Waddy Wachtel called Don't Know Nothing No More, Didn't Know Nothing Before… but we didn't finish it.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before...

There's a lot of things I wish I had not told an interviewer before! I keep buying basses, but I don't play bass. I don't know what that's about. I've got some really beautiful basses, lots of them, but I don't play them. I don't know what I'm doing with them.

Colin Irwin

Downhill From Everywhere is out on July 23 on Inside Recordings.

Nels Israelson

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

John Hiatt

The songwriter's songwriter flips out over Little **Stevie Wonder**'s Fingertips Parts 1 & 2 (Tamla, 1963)

I think it was about '63. I was 11. I was already playing guitar at home [in Indianapolis], already finger-poppin' and grooving. My elder brother had a set of bongos, I'd beat on those, and pots and pans, driving my mother crazy. Then I heard Fingertips on the radio. It started with the MC bringing him out, calling him a 12-year-old genius, and the rhythm started. I think Stevie starts playing bongos, then harmonica. It's a minute before he starts singing. Man, it seemed like it went on forever. The recording was live, and I'd never heard anything that exciting, or someone so talented do so many things in the course of how many minutes it was! It had everything that I think music brings to the table, the excitement – how it takes you to another place and elevates you beyond belief. His talent was everywhere. I thought, I don't know how you do that, but I'd love to know! I wanted to be a 12-year-old genius. He certainly was. So, I went downtown to buy the record. I fancied myself having decent rhythm, when I heard it, it was like it was all right to be finger-poppin', let's rock, non-stop. In 6th grade we were putting bands together, playing songs of the day, but I never remember being able to pull off Fingertips.

Another record changed my life, and it's hard to pick between them: Dylan's Like A Rolling Stone. It was 1965, I was just post-puberty, and I remember being in the car. My mother parked outside the drug store and went in, and Like A Rolling Stone came on the radio, and I remember I felt so changed I thought my mother wouldn't recognise me. I was convinced I was now a different person. He was singing, "How does it feel?" And I was going, "I know! I know how it feels!" Whatever it was, I don't know. He rewrote songwriting. Those two records, man.

As told to Ian Harrison

John Hiatt with The Jerry Douglas Band's Leftover Feelings is out now on New West.

FINGERTIPS - Part 1 & 2
LITTLE STEVIE WONDER
THE 12 YEAR OLD GENIUS
54080

REVEALED! ALICE COLTRANE'S SANSKRIT-VIA-MOTOWN SOLO WURLITZER OPUS

OUT NEXT MONTH, Alice Coltrane's *Kirtan: Turiya Sings* captures the godmother of spiritual jazz at the peak of her practice. Originally a private press cassette, elements of it were heard on *The Ecstatic Music Of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda*, the superb 2017 Luaka Bop comp which won new legions of admirers and was MOJO's Reissue Of The Year. But this edition is something rarer still, and captures the Detroit jazz innovator's unadorned original passes for the album: just her Wurlitzer and voice, put down live in one take.

"It goes back to the sessions she played for her students each Sunday," says producer Ravi Coltrane, her son, saxophonist and curator, "when the Wurlitzer became her primary voice."

Coltrane's spirituality helped her overcome the trauma of losing her husband, bebop sax god John Coltrane, in 1967. A single mother with four children, she sought guidance from Swami Satchidananda (the Hindu guru who opened Woodstock), took on the name Turiyasangitananda ("the transcendental lord's highest song of bliss") and began a voyage beyond jazz with 1971's harp-laced *Journey In Satchidananda*.

After regular pilgrimages to India, Coltrane established her own ashram, the Vedantic Centre, in California in 1975, where she adapted Sanskrit bhajans (Indian hymns) to her original melodies. Initially apprehensive about releasing the songs without the strings and synthesizers she later added – almost the opposite scenario to when Alice added overdubs to her husband's posthumous album *Infinity* in 1972 – the purity of the recordings ultimately won out. "This is what you heard at the ashram," says Ravi. "My mother leading the congregation, who would sing along too."

The master tapes were discovered when Coltrane came out of semi-retirement in 2004 to work with Ravi on her final album, *Translinear Light*. "When I heard them, I was blown away. I started speaking to Universal about releasing it immediately," he says. Their power was undimmed when Ravi and engineer Steve Genewick finally began mixing 17 years later: "As soon as I heard my mother's voice coming through in such an immediate way, I had to compose myself. It was overwhelming to hear the sound of her voice so clearly, as if she was in the room."

How much of it goes back to her roots playing organ in the Mount Olive Baptist Church? "When I've played it to friends, the first thing they hear is the gospel," says Ravi. "It's the sound of Detroit, you can hear Motown in its harmonies."

For all its meditative heft, he admits curating his parents' catalogues is a process that has to be carefully weighed: "I'm always excited to hear an unreleased recording. But with that excitement comes the responsibility of honouring my parents' legacies with dignity." The good news is "there's plenty of incredible music" in the can, much of it truffled out by Japanese mega-fan and super-sleuth Yushiro Fujioka. Next, in autumn, is a John Coltrane Quartet live album recorded in the same week as his 1965 Pharoah Sanders collaboration, *Live In Seattle*. "John sounds amazing on it," beams Ravi. "They're playing material from *A Love Supreme* and it has real historic value."

Andy Cowan

Kirtan: Turiya Sings is released July 16 on Impulse!

alice
COLTRANE
KIRTAN TURIYA SINGS

> **"I had to compose myself. It was overwhelming."**
> **RAVI COLTRANE**

From her to eternity: (right) Alice Coltrane performing in 1987 and (above) with son Ravi in 2004.

David McClister, Redferns/Frans Schellekens, Getty

Feline all right: Ellen McIlwaine and friend, 1972; (below) Ellen today with her school bus.

HENDRIX FAVE ELLEN McILWAINE, STILL BLAZING UP THE BOTTLENECK BLUES

IN 1966, BLUES guitarist Ellen McIlwaine got the biggest gig of her life. Two sets per night, six nights a week, for six months, at New York's Cafe Au Go Go – all for a flat fee of $1.50 a night. "That was when I met Jimi Hendrix for the first time," she remembers of that far-off Greenwich Village residency. "He was a gentle, brilliant accompanist and a great friend; like an older brother."

The 21-year-old with the pre-Raphaelite look and the Guild acoustic had a globetrotting backstory. Born in Nashville but adopted at five weeks old, she was raised by missionaries in Kobe, Japan. Discovering the American Forces Network, she fell hard for the likes of Fats Domino and Professor Longhair. Hendrix's influence, meanwhile, was heard on her 1968 studio debut fronting blues rock outfit Fear Itself, a group she formed then disbanded after that sole long-player, the departure of one bassist and the death of his replacement.

For 1972's Bonnie-Raitt-via-Betty-Carter solo long-player, *Honky Tonk Angel*, she decided to go all out. It's a maximalist maelstrom: intricate, instinctive, deeply funky, with the occasional gnarled psych freakout, scat digression and hillbilly yodel thrown in. Sadly, her record company were less enthusiastic about her versatility.

"It's always been a hindrance as well as an asset to be completely original," McIlwaine explains. "Critics don't know what to compare me to. I played a few gigs in Pennsylvania with Tom Waits – we both didn't fit into any convenient box."

After her three solo LPs of lovelorn defiance failed to take off, her record company took the unusual step of preventing her playing guitar on her own album.

"I was told I didn't 'have the chops'," she says. "Every night I rocked my acoustic and cried in the apartment hotel they put me up in."

In retaliation, McIlwaine set off alone, recording *The Real Ellen McIlwaine* with the Ville Émard Blues Band in Montreal, playing with her hero Jack Bruce and moving to Calgary. She created soundtracks to plays and films (including 1999 environmental documentary Pocket Desert: Confessions Of A Snake Killer) and gigged relentlessly, sleeping in her minivan to save money.

Thanks in part to an excellent 1995 reissue on Stony Plain Recordings, she was sampled by Fatboy Slim on 1996's Song For Lindy, and became a rare groove favourite with the likes of Gilles Peterson and David Holmes. Still a cult prospect ("No interest, no gigs and no money," McIlwaine retorts), she continued to play internationally, including Japanese club engagements with DJ Ken Yanai. Still, she needed to pay her rent, and since 2013 she has driven a school bus.

"I never had any children because I gave up everything to play music. Now I have bus loads," she says. "I would not do over a single minute: it took everything I went through to get me where I am today."

She's currently working on a documentary, and will complete her autobiography this summer.

"If they have to wheel me out on a gurney, I will still crank up the slide and blast away," says McIlwaine, who celebrates 40 years of sobriety this November. "Never ever will I quit."

Andy Morris

See Ellenmcilwaine.com and Bandcamp for sounds and info.

> "It's always been a hindrance as well as an asset to be completely original."
> **ELLEN McILWAINE**

Getty

FARTHER ALONG

McIlwaine explores the blues and beyond.

Honky Tonk Angel

(POLYDOR, 1972)

A mind-expanding, slide-guitar driven take on funk, folk and jazz, with a killer version of Blind Faith's Can't Find My Way Home and choppy Stax funk workout Toe Hold. Charisma and technical virtuosity shine through.

We The People

(POLYDOR, 1973)

Folky originals showcase her talent, covers of Jack Bruce show her versatility. Her unaccompanied Farther Along is spiritually sound, her take on Glenn Yarbrough's wicky wacky folk Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven celestial.

The Real Ellen McIlwaine

(KOT'AI, 1975)

Opening with her discombobulating take on Stevie's Higher Ground, McIlwaine's strongest LP also boasts covers of John Lee Hooker and Albert King. The originals, like Down So Low, are equal parts heart-rending and thrilling.

MAID OF ORLEANS · OMD · 1981

OMD

ARCHITECTURE & MORE TOUR

NOVEMBER 2021 plus special guests **SCRITTI POLITTI** •

- 1 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
- 2 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
- 3 GATESHEAD SAGE
- 5 HULL BONUS ARENA
- 6 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA •
- 7 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
- 9 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
- 10 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA •
- 12 BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA •
- 13 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO •
- 14 BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE •
- 16 BRIGHTON CENTRE •
- 17 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
- 19 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO

EXTRA DATE ADDED DUE TO DEMAND

- 20 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
- SOLD OUT LIVERPOOL EMPIRE THEATRE

EXTRA DATE ADDED DUE TO DEMAND

- 23 LIVERPOOL EVENTIM OLYMPIA

AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | AXS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | OMD.UK.COM

AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH X-RAY

elbow

TOUR 2021

PLUS SPECIAL GUEST **JESCA HOOP**

WITH A MUSICAL INTERLUDE BY **PETER ALEXANDER JOBSON**

SEPTEMBER 2021

WED 01 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
THU 02 HULL BONUS ARENA
SOLD OUT 05 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
MON 06 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
WED 08 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
THU 09 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
SOLD OUT 10 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
SOLD OUT 12 LIVERPOOL EVENTIM OLYMPIA
SOLD OUT 13 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
SOLD OUT 14 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
SOLD OUT 16 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
FRI 17 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
SOLD OUT 18 BRIGHTON CENTRE
MON 20 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
TUE 21 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
WED 22 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
SOLD OUT 24 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
SUN 26 BOURNEMOUTH IC
SOLD OUT 28 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
SOLD OUT 29 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
SOLD OUT 30 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO

ELBOW.CO.UK • AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK • AXS.COM • TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

AEGPRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH X-RAY

AGAINST THE ODDS

AEG PRESENTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO

BLONDIE

WITH SPECIAL GUEST: **GARBAGE**

NOVEMBER 2021

- 06 LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA
- 08 BIRMINGHAM UTILITA ARENA
- 09 MANCHESTER AO ARENA
- SOLD OUT HULL BONUS ARENA
- 12 NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA
- SOLD OUT BRIGHTON CENTRE
- 16 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
- 18 LONDON THE O2
- 20 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
- 21 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA

AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | AXS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | BLONDIE.NET

Blues in Mono

Seasick Steve

Just Steve, a guitar and you

NOVEMBER 2021

THU 04 **BEXHILL** DE LA WARR PAVILION
SAT 06 **NOTTINGHAM** ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SUN 07 **LONDON** PALLADIUM
TUE 09 **BIRMINGHAM** SYMPHONY HALL
THU 11 **YORK** BARBICAN
SAT 13 **EDINBURGH** USHER HALL
SUN 14 **MANCHESTER** LOWRY
TUE 16 **NEWCASTLE** O2 CITY HALL
WED 17 **BRISTOL** HIPPODROME

AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | **AXS**.COM | **TICKETMASTER**.CO.UK

AEG PRESENTS, DHP, KILIMANJARO, REGULAR AND AMG IN ASSOCIATION WITH X-RAY

NEW ALBUM *OUT NOW*

With Cephalopod On Our Side: Squid on the rocks (from left): Louis Borlase, Anton Pearson, Ollie Judge, Arthur Leadbetter and Laurie Nankivell

> “It’s five people with differing opinions shouting at each other.”
> **OLLIE JUDGE**

INDIE-KOSMISCHE SCREAMERS SQUID ARGUE IN HARMONY

SQUID’S SINGING drummer Ollie Judge can’t hang around today – he’s due at work in an hour. “I got a job at Rough Trade’s warehouse in Bristol seven months ago, to stay sane over lockdown,” he says. “I quite like the extra money as well.”

As well as packing up popular choices by Rag’n’Bone Man, Jane Weaver and Sault, he’s also been dispatching pallets of Squid’s bracing debut Bright Green Field, which debuted at UK Number 4 in May. It’s some achievement for such a non-linear, stylistically catholic record, where motorik rhythms sharp-elbow it out with funk, math-rock, jazz, electronics, tape manipulation, dub and beyond, as Judge speaks-shouts lyrics of being marooned in his immediate environment and the virtual and psychological spaces beyond.

“Apart from one song, the whole thing was written before we even knew what coronavirus was,” says Judge of its oblique topicality. “It’s just a series of accidents that it seems so timely in mood… we write totally as a group, and it’s five people with differing opinions shouting at each other, but each moment of the music has to be liked by everyone, and every voice gets heard.”

They began when Judge, Louis Borlase (guitars, vocals), Arthur Leadbetter (keyboards, strings), Laurie Nankivell (bass, brass) and Anton Pearson (guitars, vocals) met at the University of Sussex. Previously, Judge had made chillwave as Twin Empire, Nankivell was into experimental music (one endeavour involved using a waterproof microphone to record the sound of ice in buckets cracking) and the other three were in a funk and soul band called, variously, Better Call Soul, Soul Campbell and Our Soul. Attending a show by Godspeed You! Black Emperor in October 2015, says Judge, was, “a very early Squid experience and an interesting start point. We just wanted to be in a band like that, but when we tried, we realised it was really, really hard and started doing punk music instead.” He adds their earliest shared influences were the open-ended kosmische explorations of Neu!, Can and flute-era Kraftwerk.

Full-flight live gigs and a series of mundane/wired releases including Houseplants and the Town Centre EP started the Squid cult, but they left them off the album, which is a chaotically integrated and often disturbing reflection of post-Brexit Britain and its nerve-chewing media landscape. At times the tracklist drills into the subcutaneous panic layer with literary echoes of psycho-social augurs Douglas Coupland, Mark Fisher and JG Ballard, whose 1974 novel Concrete Island haunts queasy groove G.S.K. “Ballard would have enjoyed the empty airports and deserted holiday resorts, but I don’t reckon he’d have liked no cars on the road,” is Judge’s verdict on how the Seer of Shepperton would have weathered the early lockdown.

Stirring again after too long in enforced hibernation, Squid tour Britain from July, head to Europe in October and go to the US in November. They’re already thinking of album number two. “The music we’re writing is a lot more melodic and I definitely want to start shouting less,” says Judge. “I mean, I’d love to be a pop band doing three-minute songs.” Until then, the Rough Trade warehouse calls. “My work friends are always poking fun,” he says. “They take pictures of me packing up the Squid record and put it on Instagram, saying the singer of Squid’s packing his own record up, what a humble and down-to-earth guy. I hope the ego doesn’t catch up with me. I could always flog the albums on a market, I suppose.”

Ian Harrison

Bright Green Field is out now on Warp.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Black Midi, Young Knives, Black Country New Road
- Squid love being on the Warp label. Says Judge: “I’m still pinching myself. I grew up with Aphex Twin, Boards Of Canada and Flying Lotus, and to be labelmates with people like that, and to have the Warp logo a millimetre away from our band name, is totally surreal.”
- “I’m not gonna go for Phil Collins,” says Judge, when asked who is his favourite singing drummer. Instead, he cites Cold Pumas’ Patrick Fisher and Zach Choy from Crack Cloud. “They were quite Krautrocky,” he says of the latter. “I remember looking at their drummer who sang and thinking, Cool.”
- Squiet Please! is the group’s regularly updated Spotify playlist of current faves, which at press time includes DJ Rashad, Late Of The Pier, Anika and Harry Thumann.

KEY TRACKS

- G.S.K.
- Pamphlets
- Houseplants
- Narrator

Holly Whitaker

AROOJ AFTAB'S "LOVE-ORIENTED INTOXICATION MUSIC" AND THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS…

"CALLING SOMETHING Sufi can lead to misunderstanding," warns Arooj Aftab down the line from her home in Brooklyn, keen to move on from the "ambient neo-Sufi" tag given to her 2015 debut, *Bird Under Water*. So what do you do when your sound is distinctly *sui generis*, the deceptive complexity of Terry Riley snuggling up to the soulful passion of Abida Parveen, the ethereal lighting of Elizabeth Fraser captured in the same bottle as the pastoral Nick Drake? "It's minimal with repetitive structures," she explains. "A peaceful, love-oriented, intoxication music."

Born in Saudi Arabia, Aftab was raised in Lahore, where she had a few cover versions go viral. "I quickly realised I didn't have the skills or resources. I had a bigger vision and I had to pursue it, leave my family behind, fuck it all and do this thing." She moved to America and majored in production and engineering at Boston's Berklee College of Music. "I was thinking ahead. I wanted to make sure I would be able to do work that wasn't just music-based."

Supporting herself with day jobs as an audio engineer and editor, she recorded *Bird Under Water*, merging traditional Pakistani music with downbeat electronica. *Vulture Prince* came out in April this year, picking up the threads of its predecessor but "driving the form in a different way"; musically more international, with a nostalgia and sadness throughout. Aftab talks about "worlds once known" – the Pakistan she grew up in no longer feels like it belongs to her – and about emerging from grief after the death of her brother. "I feel like by saying it, that this is what is being manifested. Grief is very bizarre, and it doesn't ever go away. The 'emergence' is more assimilating this into your daily life."

> **"I'm a nerd. I love cables and knobs."**
> **AROOJ AFTAB**

Between those two albums came the home-recorded soundscapes of 2018's *Siren Islands*. "I bought some analogue synthesizers and tape machines, wrote four pieces, didn't collaborate, no acoustic instruments, broke all my personal rules. It was fantastic." The album thematically embodies female empowerment, so is there advice she would like to pass on to women with musical aspirations? "Understand what happens in the studio," she says. "Nobody will take you seriously unless you have the language to communicate what you want. I'm a huge nerd. I love cables and knobs and microphones, and I want to able to focus and not worry about how annoying dudes can be."

David Hutcheon

Arooj Aftab's Vulture Prince is out now on New Amsterdam.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Joanna Newsom, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Cocteau Twins, Terry Riley.
- *Vulture Prince* was inspired by the Tower of Silence, the Parsi funeral pyre upon which the dead are consumed as carrion. "There's only so much you can rip off the Zoroastrians," she says.
- For maximum enjoyment of the album, there's a *Vulture Prince* perfume oil available on her Bandcamp page, created by Dana El Masri. "The perfume is what the album should sound like, but it's doing it, it's totally doing it."

KEY TRACKS

- Lullaby
- Baghon Main
- Island No 2

Arooj Aftab: breaking all her personal rules.

Diana Markosian, Shutterstock

MOJO PLAYLIST

All rise, for the month's best epic pop, sunny dub and punk reborn.

1 THE SMILE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TOMORROW BRINGS

The surprise of Glastonbury's livestream from May 22: Thom Yorke (above), Jonny Greenwood and Sons Of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner's new band. Their intriguing set peaked with this Cure-esque glower.
Find it: *Twitter @thesmiletheband*

2 THE BEACH BOYS BIG SUR

Time to retire those old *Landlocked* bootlegs, as this serene Cali beatitude is officially release. From the *Sunflower/Surf's Up* outtakes box set *Feel Flows*, released on July 30.
Find it: *streaming services*

3 SHARON VAN ETTEN & ANGEL OLSEN LIKE I USED TO

Alchemical results from this indie hook-up, as Springsteen meets late Abba's epic pop theatre.
Find it: *YouTube*

4 MOUSE RAT THE PIT

The grunge revival starts here, with the debut from Pawnee, Indiana's second-best band. Parks & Recreation fans will already know Chris Pratt's sensational Veddering.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 XAN TYLER & MAD PROFESSOR CLARION CALL

Technique singer Tyler pairs with UK dubmaster. More sunny than spacey, her voice balances lyrical bite.
Find it: *YouTube*

6 PAUL WELLER AND MADNESS THE HARDER THEY COME

Live at the Palladium in May, Jimmy Cliff's anthem finds Weller and the Mads in soulful yet justified mood.
Find it: *YouTube*

7 A CERTAIN RATIO THE GUV'NOR

ACR pay tribute to Andrew Weatherall via depth-charging techno with extra drums.
Find it: *ACR: EPC 12-inch/Bandcamp*

8 NATHAN SALSBURG PSALM 147

Scholar of folk tradition turns his attention to Hebrew psalms, with help from Joan Shelley, Will Oldham and James Elkington.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

THE CLASH
CUT THE CRAP REBOOTED

9 THE CLASH THREE CARD TRICK (REBOOTED)

Fan Gerald Manns took The Clash's synthy *Cut The Crap*, isolated Joe Strummer's voice and re-recorded it with aggro-punk guitars. Its possibly unofficial new vinyl release Mohawk Revenge will help fund a Berlin Clash museum.
Find it: *YouTube*

10 STEWART LEE USE YOUR LOAF

The 41st best stand-up ever folk-drones The Nightingales' 1982 song of toil, with the 'Gales' newie Ten Bob Each Way on the 45 flip.
Find it: *Fire 7-inch/streaming services*

MOJO
The Music Magazine
BOWIE
CRASH COURSE FOR THE RAVERS
THE MOJO BOWIE COMPANION
IN MY LIFE
Escape From Reality
KIDOLOGY
A RADIOHEAD COMPANION
MOJO HEROES
THE BEST OF 2020
PSYCH OPS!
15 new garage rock nuggets
Why Can't I Be You?
MOJO PRESENTS A TRIBUTE TO THE CURE
AFTERGLOW RARE! LIVE! UNRELEASED!
STEVE MARRIOTT
SMALL FACES • HUMBLE PIE
THE COLOURS OF SPRING
INTO TOMORROW
the BLACK KEYS present
THE HILL COUNTRY BLUES
You Gotta Move!

CALL: 01858 438884
QUOTE: FHAA
VISIT: www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo

MOJO FOR ONLY £4.50 A MONTH

Terms & Conditions: Subscriptions will start with the next available issue. The minimum term is 12 months. Recurring payments will continue to be taken unless you tell us otherwise. This offer closes on 20/09/2021. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Cost from landlines for 01 numbers per minute are (approximate) 2p to 10p. Cost from mobiles per minute (approximate) 10p to 40p. Costs vary depending on the geographical location in the UK. You may get free calls to some numbers as part of your call package – please check with your phone provider. Order lines open 8am-9.30pm (Mon-Fri), 8am-4pm (Sat). UK orders only. Overseas? Phone +44 1858 438828. Calls may be monitored or recorded for training purposes. For full terms and conditions please visit: http://www.greatmagazines.co.uk/offer-terms-and-conditions

SUBSCRIBE TO MOJO FOR £4.50 A MONTH!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND BENEFIT FROM:

- Never miss an issue
- Enjoy all the regular benefits of your favourite music magazine – including exclusive CDs with every issue - with our special, subscriber-only covers
- Free UK Delivery to your door / instant download to your Smartphone or Tablet
- Only £4.50 a month!

PRINT ONLY

£4.50 A MONTH WHEN YOU PAY BY RECURRING PAYMENT

MOJO
The Music Magazine
You Gotta Move!

DIGITAL ONLY

£2.10 A MONTH WHEN YOU PAY BY RECURRING PAYMENT

ROLLING STONES STICKY FINGERS AT 50
MOJO
AMY WINEHOUSE
ZZ TOP
CROWDED HOUSE
YOLA
FAMILY
VIOLENT FEMMES
NICO

Through **50 years of taboo-busting**, hat revamps and **beard-growth**, the **"Dali of the Delta"** has **kept faith with the blues.** Has his mojo never flagged? **"Plug in, turn it up** – that's always been the reward," says **Billy Gibbons**.

Interview by **DAVID FRICKE** • Portrait by **ROGER KISBY**

BARELY 10 MINUTES AFTER HE PICKS UP the phone on a recent afternoon, singer-guitarist Billy F. Gibbons answers the day's big question without even being asked.

"They're in the studio *today*!" he exclaims in his deep, sandpaper drawl. 'They' are his ZZ Top bandmates of the last half-century: bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Beard. While Gibbons is on the line from his pandemic refuge in one of Las Vegas's oldest residential neighbourhoods – a house he and his wife Gilligan have dubbed Rancho G – the rhythm section is in Houston hammering at new material for ZZ Top's first album in a decade.

"The high card I was able to pull was writing songs," Gibbons says of his lockdown year, which began with the cancellation of his venerable group's 2020 tour, then veered into sessions for a new, ferociously good solo album, *Hardware*, made at a studio in the California desert with ex-Guns N'Roses drummer Matt Sorum and guitarist Austin Hanks. "In the lowest of lows, we hit the highest of highs," Gibbons declares of *Hardware*'s twin-guitar sizzle and detours into surf rock and psychedelia. "And as I was creating music for that project, I was sending song ideas to Texas. As much as Frank and Dusty want to hang in front of the TV and on the golf course, I've been keeping them in the studio." The guitarist's gritty burst of laughter is not the last as he rolls through his life in blues over the next two hours.

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Don't fear the beard, advises **Josh Homme**.

Getty

"When I first met Billy he'd come in to play on a Queens Of The Stone Age record [*Lullabies To Paralyze*, 2005]. He was playing guitar and hit this note and his beard fell and it muted the strings and made this *harmonic*. I sat there stunned. He said, 'That's a first ever beard harmonic.' Even his *beard* is a good guitar player."

Gibbons, who's added his middle initial – for Frederick, his father's name – to his professional handle, was born on December 16, 1949 in Houston into remarkable circumstances. The son of a pianist and conductor for films, he attended his first blues gigs as a child, courtesy of his family's black housekeeper. In 1967, Gibbons' teenage combo, The Moving Sidewalks, scored a regional hit with their debut single, 99th Floor. But turning-point encounters with The 13th Floor Elevators and The Jimi Hendrix Experience ultimately led Gibbons to launch an early line-up of ZZ Top in 1969. When Beard and Hill joined in 1970, Gibbons' template was permanently in place: "blues rock with a power trio rock expressiveness," as he puts it.

His addition of synthesizers and pop-sharpened writing to 1983's *Eliminator* and '85's *Afterburner* paid multi-platinum dividends; the band's drily comic finesse in the MTV-breakthrough videos for Gimme All Your Lovin' and Sharp Dressed Man, starring Gibbons and Hill's mondo-Gold Rush beards, didn't hurt. But Gibbons insists that ZZ Top have never strayed from their original, primal thrust. "We're interpreters of the blues," he says. "But we were fortunate to get chummy with the inventors. And they told us, on more than one occasion, 'It's not about heartache and sorrow. It runs the whole gamut.'"

You were born in a blues city and state. But your father was in a very different show business.

Growing up, it was a constant travelling between Texas and California. Getting to see how

➢

things were done behind the scenes, the magic that hits the silver screen – that in itself was an education. My dad was part of the team of music directors at MGM. This was before I was born, from 1936 to about 1944. He learned by ear and taught himself to read music. It was interesting to learn later that he didn't even know the name of a C chord until he was 28 or 29. But he learned to deliver all sorts of styles.

Except the blues – you got there through your family's housekeeper.

Stella Matthews – Big Stella – and her daughter, Little Stella, were instrumental in lifting the lid, leading me into the wonderful art form of the blues. My dad, being the entertainer, was working most evenings with his group. He would drive with my sister Pam and I to downtown Houston, and many times he'd say, "Kids, you want to overnight with Stella?" Because we were giving her a ride home.

Stella, by this time, was exhausted; she'd be asleep by eight o'clock. That's when Little Stella grabbed us by the hand, and we walked down two blocks to the juke joint. This was in the [historically African-American] Fourth Ward, at the corner of Taft and West Gray. That's where all the big acts stopped on their way through town: Jimmy Reed, Howlin' Wolf…

It sounds so improbable, considering your age and the racial situation in Texas: a young black woman escorting two white children into a blues club.

This is where it really gets interesting. Little Stella ended up marrying a guy named Willie Francis, who was part of Ray Charles's organisation. And Willie Francis knew everybody at the club. So when we were tiptoeing into the club – Pam was five, I was seven – it was all smiles: "Yeah, come on in." We never even questioned it: "Oh, we get to go hear music!"

And your father took you to a B.B. King recording session when you were seven years old…

The main recording studios in Houston were Bill Quinn's outfit, Gold Star – everybody knows Lightnin' Hopkins on Gold Star Records – and Bill Holford's ACA Studios. My dad was constantly in and out of ACA. One afternoon, he said, "Why don't you hop in the car? I've got some work to do at the studio." He put me in a chair and said, "I want you to sit here. I'll be in the office if you need me, but I think you'll enjoy this. There's an orchestra coming in." Lo and behold, the orchestra was B.B. King and company. That moment was instrumental in leading me to the knowledge that it was the guitar making the sound I was so attracted to.

You got your first guitar as a Christmas present when you were 13. What were the records that had the most impact on you as you learned to play?

I can say quite pointedly: Jimmy Reed. There was a song called Honey Don't Let Me Go. It was a B-side [to the 1956 single You've Got Me Dizzy]. For some reason, I kept going back to that one song. And B.B. King had a largely instrumental track, [1961's] Ain't That Just Like A Woman – the band shouts the title phrase, and B.B. would answer on guitar. The third entry in that grouping would be What'd I Say by Ray Charles – that electric piano and the drummer riding the bell of the cymbal. Those three recordings still have me mystified.

It's funny that you mention What'd I Say. That electric-piano lick sounds a lot like the guitar riff in 99th Floor, The Moving Sidewalks' 1967 debut and one of the first songs you wrote.

Just goes to show you that certain things don't die quickly. These riffs still keep coming around. Take ZZ Top. Here's three guys who have stayed together for five decades. And when we get together in a rehearsal room or the recording studio, out of a day's session, I'd say half of it is spent with Frank, Dusty and I playing songs that we remember from growing up like [1959's] Linda Lu by Ray Sharpe, who came out of Dallas. Leaping forward to the present, to *Hardware*, I had a couple of California buddies who were clicking their heels: "That song, West Coast Junkie – you've returned to surf sounds!" Well, you can't deny Walk Don't Run by The Ventures or Pipeline by The Chantays. Pop music covers a lot of ground.

For a time, The Moving Sidewalks were housemates in Houston with Austin acid zealots The 13th Floor Elevators. Was it trips for breakfast every morning?

There was experimentation on many levels. I remember going up to the Elevators' part of the house and walking into the kitchen. And there were the Elevators, gathering around the stove, and they had a cake pan sprinkled with weed. They had put it under the broiler. The kitchen became a smokehouse. (*Laughs*) Whether you were actively lighting up a joint or not, you were under the influence.

Could you see the impact of that lifestyle on their singer, Roky Erickson? And did the Sidewalks face any of the police harassment and arrests that broke up the Elevators and sent Erickson to a mental institution?

Roky's vocal delivery – those maniacal screams would curl your hair. He had a rage that was like, "Little Richard, step aside." But the counterculture was not in favour with law enforcement or the Great Society. The Elevators quickly made the decision to hustle out to the West Coast.

We had the advantage of coming and going. The success of 99th Floor opened the door to the long, lonesome highway of touring. Texas, even today, is its own thing, that other country. I remember talking with Doug Sahm about this. He made the exodus [to San

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Billy Gibbons: caught by the (face) fuzz.

1 Ready to jump off at the 99th Floor: young Gibbons' yearbook photo, 1968.

2 "You've got a lot of nerve": The Moving Sidewalks (Billy, second right) with Jimi Hendrix, Forth Worth, Texas, February 17, 1968.

3 Mudlarks: outtakes (with 4, below) from the *Rio Grande Mud* album shoot, Texas, August 1971.

4 "Texas, even today, is its own thing, that other country": ZZ Top (from left) Frank Beard, Billy, Dusty Hill, 1971.

5 "We're going to take Texas to the world": Dusty and Billy on the Worldwide Texas Tour, September 1975.

6 "Dusty and I just threw away the razor": (from left) Hill, Gibbons and the beardless Beard.

7 Las Vegas state of mind: Gibbons with wife Gilligan Stillwater in the Nevada city, 2009.

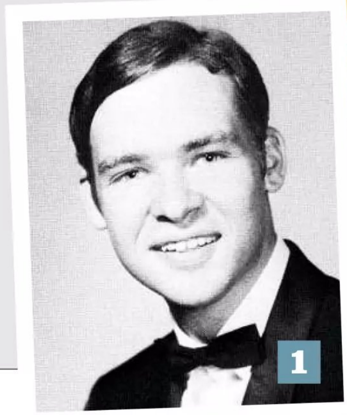
8 What's in a name?: Billy and Scotty Moore flank B.B., source of both ZZ and "If he was the King, then we were headed for the Top."

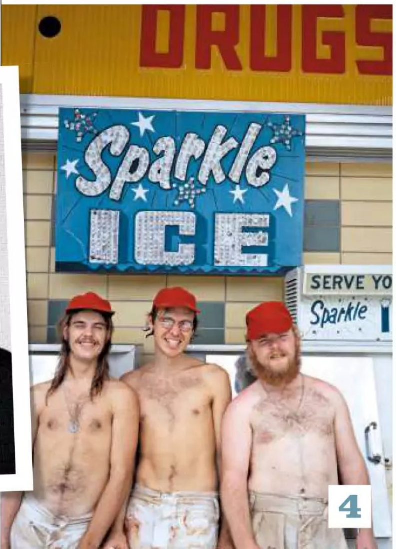
9 In the shades: Gibbons performing Cheap Sunglasses, on-stage with Jack White, then of The Raconteurs, August 31, 2006.

10 "Hell, we were just having a good time": Gibbons with his Gibson Les Paul, on-stage in 1980.

2

3


1


4

5

courtesy Billy Gibbons, Getty (6), ©Bud Lee Picture Maker (2), Camera Press

Francisco] with the entire Sir Douglas Quintet. But he said that the harshness and threats reinforced that mindset, the obstinance that goes with the Texas thing: “You’re not going to tell me what to do.”

Speaking of audacity, The Moving Sidewalks opened shows in Fort Worth and Houston for The Jimi Hendrix Experience in February 1968. And you played two of Hendrix’s hits before he came on. He didn’t mind?

We only had enough songs to deliver a show, and that included Foxy Lady and Purple Haze, which we learned from his first album. And they were our closing numbers. On the first night, I was looking at this guy standing in the shadows with his arms folded, stroking his chin. When we walked off stage, he grabbed me and said, “I like you. You’ve got a lot of nerve.” Later, there was quite a bit of panic as we tried to get hotel rooms. We were escorted to the far end of the hallway. But Jimi said, “Hey, take the room across the way.”

> “**The Elevators** had a cake pan **sprinkled with weed,** put it under the broiler. **The kitchen became a smokehouse!**”

What were the lessons you took from that time with him?

Hendrix was doing things with the electric guitar that had not even been thought of, that it was not designed for. I was playing a Stratocaster, another thing that endeared me to him. One night, in the hotel, he said, “Come check this out.” He was taking the spring off the whammy bar, cutting two [coils] off the spring so you could really push the bar down – just dive bomb.

There was the string-bending – how he got that effect in Foxy Lady – and that powerhouse backing of Mitch Mitchell on drums and Noel Redding on bass. Jimi often said, “Man, isn’t it great? I can go from here to the stratosphere, knowing that I’ve got a rock-solid wall supporting those excursions. Nobody loses the beat. Nobody loses the sense of where the music is going.” From that, I had Dusty and Frank doing much the same, offering a rock-solid foundation: going through the changes but hammering the tonic [note]. That lives on today. When things get back to live entertainment, ZZ Top will be playing everything with Dusty holding down the tonic.

You started ZZ Top as a trio in 1969 with Hill and Beard joining the next year. What was it about that format that appealed to you?

The line-up was spare, but the sound was sonic bombast. Frank and Dusty had already been learning their chops together as teenagers [in the Dallas-Fort Worth band American Blues]. I literally inherited as stalwart a backing section as one could ask for. And all we had to do was turn on the radio and there was I Feel Free, Sunshine Of Your Love, all of the examples of Cream. Between Cream and Hendrix, I don’t think there were too many other acts that need to be brought into the discussion. Right there you’ve got the Mack Truck going through a school zone.

Is it fair to say that, from the beginning, you’ve been the leader?

Well, I’d like to think so (*laughs*). It’s funny – all three members share the same birth year. We’re only separated by three months. Unfortunately, I’m the junior executive of the bunch. But, yeah, I’m looked upon in the songwriting process. We’ll go into the studio. Frank’s drum stick and Dusty’s bass guitar are pointed at me, and they say, “All right, give us a beat.” Or, “Tell us where to go.” Frank and Dusty were able to deliver what I wanted to hear in my head.

The culture and atmosphere of Texas are an integral part of ZZ Top’s image: the ten-gallon hats, album titles like [1972’s] *Rio Grande Mud*. Was that your concept from the start? And where did you get the band’s name?

Let me back up just a bit. The Moving Sidewalks were managed by Steve Ames. We met during a chance late-night encounter at a grocery store. Steve was driving a brand new Corvette Stingray – that model had just been released on the streets. In addition to being fascinated with guitars, I was just as hooked on cars.

Steve was like another version of Phil Spector. He had talent. He knew how to play and he knew arrangements. He had valuable input on those records. But he was fascinated by Texas, having just come from California. Suddenly, he’s surrounded with this strange footwear, cowboy boots: “And what are these hats you guys wear?” The elements of Texania – those peculiarities – became a thing. It never left. And we came up with the name because it sounded like B.B. King – ZZ being at the end of the alphabet. And if he was King, we were headed for the top. ➢

6

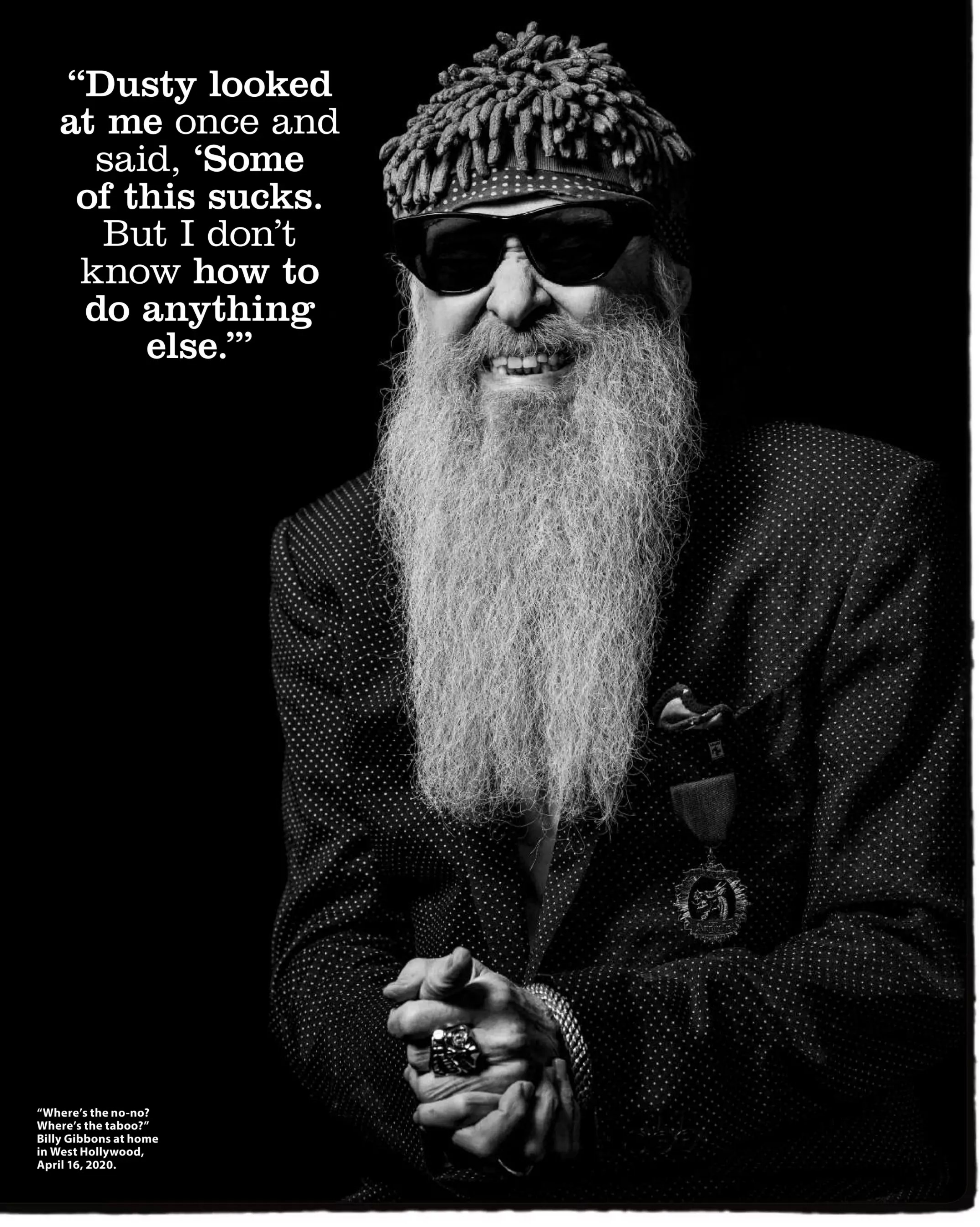
10

MIRA NIGHTCLUB
7

8

9

“**Dusty looked at me** once and said, ‘**Some of this sucks.** But I don’t know **how to do anything else.**’”



“Where’s the no-no? Where’s the taboo?” Billy Gibbons at home in West Hollywood, April 16, 2020.

Roger Kisby

Your longtime manager, the late Bill Ham, was unusually hands-on, credited with producing the albums, sometimes as a songwriter. What were his real contributions to your success?

He was following in the footsteps of Colonel Tom Parker. We let Bill wear the title of songwriter and producer. But Bill’s high card was keeping three wayward, crazy musicians in line – and keeping the doors closed so nobody could get to us. That was mainly Colonel Tom’s way of dealing with Elvis Presley: people want what they can’t have. It was an unusual relationship, but I credit Bill with having had the chutzpah and gumption to stay with three guys through the harsh reality behind the scenes. We were all pushing the limits. But Bill was ready to take on the world, and we were all too willing to pony up and do our best.

What were the bumps in the road? Beard has spoken candidly about his heroin addiction in the ’70s.

Frank had his challenging moments. There are a couple of photographs of Frank sitting on the drum throne with his eyes closed, and he wasn’t concentrating on the next Buddy Rich riff (*laughs*). And Dusty and I had our flings with Jack Daniel’s. Let’s face it: all of us human beings are gifted with what I call the Joker

Gene – something in our makeup that we want to get away from or out of, that makes us go crazy and take it to extremes.

Hopping on a bus is not necessarily a glamorous topic. To walk on [stage], plug in, turn it up – that's always been the reward. I think of it as the fourth member of the band. But there were moments when you scratch your head and think, Good grief, do I want to continue this madness? I remember Dusty looked at me once and said, "Some of this sucks. But I don't know how to do anything else." We all came to that same realisation: If we quit, where do we go?

Whose idea was the Worldwide Texas Tour in 1976 and '77? At a time when Yes and Pink Floyd were playing arenas with extravagant stages and lasers, you recreated the Texas prairie with desert flora, a buffalo, a longhorn steer, rattlesnakes and buzzards. What did it cost and was it worth it?

It was the American bicentennial [in 1976], and Bill said, "We're going to take Texas to the people." That was his contribution to the zaniness. We're still quite friendly with the hero of that outing: the handler of the livestock, Mr Ralph Fisher. Everybody knew Ralph on the rodeo circuit. He was a rodeo clown – the guy in the funny outfit who ran out in the middle of the arena to divert the attention of the buckin' broncos and raging bulls. He had the trained buffalo, the longhorn steer. He had the black buzzard, Oscar – who, by the way, is still alive, on record as the oldest, tamed black buzzard, as far as we know.

But that menagerie was quite costly. One of the high figures was the money spent on making sure the ASPCA was satisfied – that all of this livestock was being tenderly cared for. At one point, Frank, Dusty and I learned that the animals were being treated better than we were. They had air-conditioned trailers. We were still in a station wagon. (*Laughs*) C'mon!

Yet in spite of the sold-out arenas, many critics dismissed ZZ Top as a boogie band. Given your love for the blues and respect for its originators, did that bother you?

It bothered us to no end. We were the dismissables. Nobody was really dissin' on us – it was more like a shrug of the shoulders: "Oh, that stuff over there." We quickly learned that our lyric content was not going to be ushered onto the same shelf as the stuff Bob Dylan was creating. The more cerebral moments were far outside of our wheelhouse. But it encouraged us to keep bringing the music we enjoyed as a band – "Come see ZZ Top and have a good time."

The story you've always told about the beards – that you and Hill surprised each other when the band reunited after a three-year break – is hard to believe: that you had no idea what the other guy was doing. Were you that separate during that time?

We were staying in touch by the daily telephone call. We were playing the waiting game. This was some stunt, at management level, to get us out of a stifling contract with London Records. Warner Bros was waiting in the wings. All we had to do was stay in touch. But the beards – people said, "How did you think of this crazy thing? Especially the irony of your fearless drummer, the clean-shaven member whose name is Beard?" The word is "lazy". Dusty and I just threw away the razor, and we let it fly.

***Eliminator* was ZZ Top's MTV breakthrough, thanks to the videos and electronics. But you were already working with synthesizers on 1981's *El Loco*, in songs like Ten Foot Pole and Groovy Little Hippie Pad. What was the attraction for you as a bluesman?**

You know when there's a brick wall and you want to see the other side of it, when somebody says, "Oh, you shouldn't go there"? It was always magnetic. You look around and say, Where's the no-no? Where's the taboo? Part of the reward for me in the studio is that glorious moment when the engineers spin around, look at you and go, "You can't do that." And I say, "Why not?"

The bass line in Groovy Little Hippie Pad came from watching a Devo rehearsal. They were in town, and I happened to stumble into the venue where they were warming up for the evening's performance. They were part of this new faction of bands, getting very experimental, learning how to make the most of these newfound contraptions. And Devo had this mischievous approach that I appreciated.

And I had a good friend who opened my eyes: "I see you're getting a little rambunctious here. Have you seen this band Depeche Mode?" I had just spent some time in France and England where I started to hear these new applications for making pop music. A lot of it was declared the antithesis of heavy, heavy sounds. But going to see Depeche Mode completely changed the landscape for me. They had no drummer, no guitar player, no bass player – the most austere setup. But if you closed your eyes, you couldn't believe what you were hearing. It was heavy as lead.

FROM A TO ZZ

Tres classics by the king of the cyber blues. Your guide: **David Fricke**.

GARAGE GUMPTION

The Moving Sidewalks
The Complete Collection
★★★★
ROCKBEAT, 2012

The teenage Gibbons christened his '66-68 combo in the spirit of The 13th Floor Elevators: "If they were going up, I was going further." This 2-CD box presents that freaked-out mission in its entirety, including a thoroughly unhinged whack at The Beatles' I Want To Hold Your Hand and a 1968 LP, *Flash*, with Gibbons pointing the way to his next band in Joe Blues.

SMALL BEARD BOOGIE

ZZ Top
Tres Hombres
★★★★
LONDON, 1973

After two albums of straightforward licks, the songwriting kicks in on ZZ's first gold record: Gibbons' frantic-telegraph riff in Waitin' For The Bus; the elliptical slither of Jesus Just Left Chicago. Beer Drinkers And Hell Raisers is an anthemic call to arena fun. But the roots are strong: Gibbons' descending bridge in the boogie La Grange is a Robert Johnson quote.

THE AXE UPDATE

Billy F. Gibbons
Hardware
★★★★
CONCORD, 2021

Attention guitar freaks: Gibbons' fretwork on this Mojave-flavoured whirl is off the hook and on the money, while the many hues of blues affirm his wide-angle view of keeping it real: the Elevators flashback in She's On Fire; the surfin' noir of West Coast Junkie; the Sergio Leone-style seance Desert High. If this is where Gibbons is headed on ZZ Top's next one, look out.

In an interview a few years ago, you told me that one of the highest compliments ZZ Top ever got was from the producer Jim Dickinson: "You have taken this blues thing to a very surrealistic place, and it still holds the tradition."

I've always had a fascination with the contemporary arts. I tell people this, and they say, "You're supposed to be this Texas-gun-slinger guitar player. What's that all about?" I tell 'em I've been looking at the abstracts for a long time. When I was 17, I made a trip over to Spain with some friends and we knocked on the door at Salvador Dali's house. He greeted us, let us in. I guess it was kind of a novelty to have visitors, especially some teenagers going, "Hey, we like you!" (*Laughs*)

Dickinson also said, "You guys are the Dali of the Delta." That's a heady tag. But it still exists. I was out in the desert for three months making *Hardware*, at a studio called Escape. The closest town was Yucca Valley, right on the edge of Joshua Tree. But it was more than just something to do [during the pandemic]. The music acknowledged the surroundings and that surrealistic energy. It catapulted us into… (*Pauses, then laughs*) Hell, we were just having a good time.

ZZ Top's record sales fell off in the '90s, even though you were still doing the business on the road. Were you concerned that the band was running out of steam?

A little bit of that. There were the glory days, the mid-'80s, when it seemed like everything was working. But you look at the present: there is so much music out there. It's not an uncommon challenge when you want something new: "Where do we start?" That's why I'm so excited about *Hardware*. It follows suit with what people are expecting. It doesn't get too far outside the arena. But there are a couple of twists and turns.

Is there an ultimate ZZ Top album still to be made? And is it worth the effort? It is a very different business now…

There's a curious aim over the horizon. What's lurking over there? There's only 12 notes in the scale. It's how you organise them. It can be aggravating, downright maddening. But one would be wise in avoiding the shrugging of the shoulders: "Everything's been done." A lot has been done. I think the higher card is, "Fine, how about *this*?"

We're witnessing the evolution of circuit design and silicon chips – computers figuring out how to do things faster and better. But if you come back to the lively spirit within the human condition, the most talented box of silicon chips is going to have a hard time conveying enthusiasm. And it can't play like Jimmy Reed.

Finally, what does it take to keep the beard under control? Do you ever get up in the morning and think, "OK, enough's enough, time to shave"?

I haven't gotten to that point. Gilligan, she's so fussy with the latest oils and lotions and conditioning. She keeps me well groomed. That side of it is OK. The question still lingers: do you sleep with the beard under the covers or over the covers?

Which is it?

I don't know. I'm asleep.

HEAVY

With their effortless songs and on-stage larks, **CROWDED HOUSE** made a good show of flying above the fray. But splits and sackings, and their drummer's shocking suicide, told another story. As Neil Finn and Nick Seymour – the "angsty songwriter" and the "smart arse" – regroup and go again, they relive the blasphemy and meat raffles, the good times and bad, with **ANDY FYFE**.

Portrait: **LYNN GOLDSMITH**.

Lynn Goldsmith

IN THE MID '80s, AMBASSADORS FROM South Pacific nations were invited to bring their national dish to a pot luck diplomatic dinner. When the New Zealand and Australian guests both turned up with a pavlova it caused a rancorous regional spat about the meringue-based dessert's origin that ran in local media for, well, days.

Likewise, ownership of the region's second-biggest musical export (after AC/DC) is also disputed, although Crowded House's classic line-up – Neil Finn OBE (from Te Awamutu, NZ, pop 13,100), Nick Seymour and Paul Hester (both from Victoria, Australia) – splits 2:1 for the Aussies. "At the rehearsal for one US chat show," recalls Seymour today, "the host introduced us with, 'Throw another shrimp on the barbie, here's Crowded House from Australia.' Neil walked over and said, 'Well, I'm from New Zealand actually.' So we ended up deciding to be 'Antipodean', which is just *so* earnest."

Frontman Finn's string of classic guitar-pop songs for Crowded House – Don't Dream It's Over, Four Seasons In One Day, Weather With You, Fall At Your Feet, Distant Sun, the list goes on – have earned him precedence. It's Finn who calls the group into existence and orders its dissolution, as he did, for the first time, in 1996, on the verge of a next-level breakthrough.

"I was all ready for it," rues Seymour. "Then Neil rings up to say he's leaving the band. That took a long time to get over."

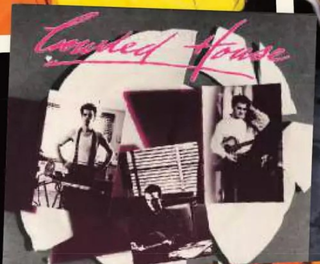
Finn's reasons, like his deceptively deep songs of self-doubt, Catholic guilt and romantic redemption, and like the man, were complicated.

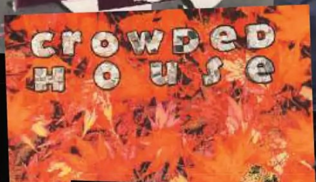
"I was, and am, ambitious," he tells MOJO today. "I wanted and want to be noticed, I wanted the music to be heard. But I definitely take responsibility for making some quite poor decisions in the band's career." ➢

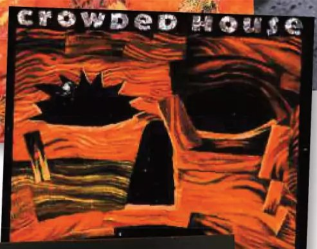
WEATHER

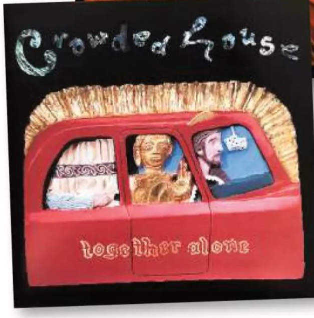
Crowded House, 1988: (from left) Neil Finn, Paul Hester, Nick Seymour. "Your personality can freeze when you become successful," says Finn, "you can become self-absorbed."

CBGB
OMFUG
315
1933









Having a Finn time: (this page, clockwise from top left) Split Enz, 1980; Hester, Seymour and Finn in New York; Seymour's sleeve artwork with a blind drawn over *Together Alone* controversy; Finn on-stage, Amsterdam, 1988; (opposite, top) Don't Dream It's Over video shoot, Sydney, 1986; Neil Finn enjoys some recreation with producer Youth.

◄ Thirty-five years since the release of their debut album, Crowded House are once again a going concern. Finn (63) and Seymour (62) have released their seventh LP, *Dreamers Are Waiting*, and just finished an actual tour of New Zealand. Any hatchets, it is presumed, are long buried. Yet across the cheeky chappies who once set the question for a Saturday morning kids TV competition as, "Which member of the band isn't circumcised?", lies the shadow of a four-decade history of bust-ups, lost friendships, and drug dalliances, plus the much longer one cast by the mental health struggles of Paul Hester and his shocking 2005 suicide.

No wonder Neil Finn fitted right in when he joined Fleetwood Mac.

NEIL FINN WAS JUST 19 WHEN HE WAS DRAFTED into older brother Tim's art rock group Split Enz, 21 when his first solo songwriting contribution, 1980's I Got You, gave Split Enz their only UK Top 20 hit. Two years later, they were poised for a follow-up with Six Months In A Leaky Boat, written by Tim about his nervous breakdown. Unfortunately, the Falklands War broke out and it fell foul of a BBC blacklist banning songs with naval connotations.

When Split Enz disbanded in 1984 no founding members remained, leaving Neil fronting what he still considered to be his brother's band. Crucially, however, a new drummer had arrived: Melbourne-born Paul Hester. Even as Split Enz conducted their farewell tour of Australia, the pair were inventing their next band and, at the final after-show party, bassist Nick Seymour 'introduced' himself.

"The story that I approached Neil at a party makes it sound like I drunkenly accosted him, but it was a *totally* calculated move," says Seymour. "I admired Neil, thought he'd written some great songs, and by hook or by crook I was going to work with this guy."

Finn, meanwhile, was vaguely aware of Seymour. "He was on the fringes of the Melbourne scene, a very gregarious, outgoing fellow – still is. Also a bit of a smart arse."

With the core trio complete, Finn and Hester trod the globe in search of a record deal, eventually signing to Capitol in America. With another guitarist, Craig Hooper, in tow, they piled into a car and set out on an Australian tour as The Mullanes, after Finn's middle name. For Finn, it was seat-of-the-pants touring that he'd never experienced with Split Enz.

"At one gig, a big yacht club in Belmont, the car park was full and we thought, 'Finally, an audience!'" says Finn. "But there were three people in our room while downstairs was packed for the biggest meat raffle in the Hunter Valley."

Australia had never been the prize, however, and when the trio, now minus Hooper, flew to Los Angeles to record their debut album they were convinced this was the big time. Hester and Seymour surfed cardboard boxes down the stairs of the band's two-bed rented apartment at 1902 N Sycamore Avenue – the titular 'crowded house' – and invited the neighbourhood back to party, while Finn worked up songs with Mitchell Froom, a young Canadian producer living in Los Feliz. Strumming acoustic guitar in Froom's back bedroom while the producer played synth bass and B3 organ, Finn glimpsed soulful paths for his songs to explore. But the early weeks in the studio were filled with wrong turns, and Finn was starting to have a mini crisis.

"I was overthinking in my own angsty songwriter way," he explains. "Some of my very first songs became successful with Split Enz, and your personality can freeze when you become successful, you can stop maturing and become self-absorbed."

Getty (2), Courtesy of Neil Finn, LFI/Avalon, ©Wendy McDougall

"I DEFINITELY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING SOME QUITE POOR DECISIONS IN THE BAND'S CAREER."
NEIL FINN

The self-titled album's first three singles tanked in the US and Capitol's interest waned. The band fell between stools: too pop for alternative success and, it seemed, too quirky for the mainstream. Attempting to fashion their own destiny, the band hit the road, busking in restaurants, small radio stations, record company offices, wherever they could stir some local interest. Eventually, the larger stations took notice, as did Capitol's bigwigs.

"Those busking shows are where we really learned how to be a band," says Finn, "how to let it all hang out and gather it back up again."

In the meantime, Don't Dream It's Over was released as a single, a last roll of the dice. Everyone liked it, but it didn't seem the kind of song to break a new act. Too downbeat. Back in Australia for a New Year's Eve gig supporting OMD, their manager called: Don't Dream It's Over was Number 36 in the Billboard singles chart.

DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER CHANGED EVERYTHING. Number 1 in Canada and New Zealand, it eventually hit Number 2 in the US and Top 30 in the UK. After three months gigging just to spark some interest, they now had a smash hit and would spend much of the next 18 months on the road around the world.

"One night, just before going on stage, the record company asked us to phone every chart return store in America to thank them for getting us to Number 3," Finn recalls with a disbelieving chuckle. "I was too frazzled and refused, but hey, we didn't get to Number 1, so maybe I was wrong."

Crowded House were about to learn how fleeting a pop moment can be. Their more melancholy second album, *Temple Of Low Men*, performed much less well than expected, and when an early version of third album *Woodface* was rejected by Capitol, a rethink was in order. Finn's somewhat random solution was to sack Seymour. As the bassist remembers it, there was no sugar coating: "He just told me he didn't want to be in a band with me any more."

A month later Seymour rang Finn and declared, "You know this is stupid?" Finn agreed, and the bass player was reinstated. Looking back, Finn admits the fault.

"Nick's a really quirky player," he says. "When he's working out a bass line he sometimes doesn't play the same thing twice for two weeks and I allowed that to become the focus of my own writing angst. It's not like we made any progress while he was gone."

Meanwhile, Finn had been writing with his elder brother again, penning an album's worth of songs in just a few days. When Neil asked if some of their co-writes might be used on *Woodface*, Tim, self-admittedly envious of the success of Don't Dream It's Over, had a half-joking proviso: yes, but only if he joined the band.

It was a bad idea. Over six years Crowded House had become a unique live act that embraced chaos. The trio's banter between songs verged on improvisational comedy, the audience encouraged to throw notes onto the stage that, if they took the band's fancy, might completely change the setlist or open a discussion on modernist art. "We had an understanding, through years of busking and rocking up anonymously at open mike nights, that if I did this, then Paul would do that and Neil would do this," Seymour says. It was a tight, slick piece of musical farce that didn't include Tim.

"Tim was a frontman," Seymour continues, "and yet here he was at the side playing keyboards during old songs he had no connection with."

Eventually, as they waited to go on-stage at King Tut's in Glasgow, Neil suggested his older brother might be happier if he left. Rumours suggested a dust-up high on the Gallagher Scale of brotherly spats, but Neil recalls nothing like that.

"There was, um, conversation and agreement, um, all actually very polite," he says haltingly, "and, you know, if two people started talking at the same time it was all, 'No, after *you*'…"

Ironically, Weather With You – one of the Finn/Finn co-writes that saved *Woodface* – became a hit in February 1992, three months after Tim left. Likewise, Crowded House's bookings in the UK went from two nights at London's tiny Borderline in June '91, to Wembley Arena exactly 12 months later. Once again, Tim had missed sharing his brother's success.

WOODFACE FLIPPED CROWDED HOUSE'S career entirely. America wasn't listening any more, but the band was now firmly established in Britain and Europe. Having migrated to Capitol's UK sister label Parlophone, Finn wanted to make a grown-up, statement album. The unlikely producer would be ex-Killing Joke bassist Martin Glover, AKA Youth, fresh from work with The Orb on ambient house trailblazer *Little Fluffy Clouds*. The band, says Seymour, bonded with him over "a big spliff and his record collection".

"We were aware of his connections with KLF and The Orb," explains Finn, "things that were right outside our sphere but had an integrity we admired. We didn't want to make a record like The Orb, but Youth was very singer-songwriter oriented as well. He liked Cat Stevens as much as he liked hardcore trance."

Decamping to the black sand beaches that line the west coast of New Zealand's North Island, they built a studio in a friend's house at Karekare, the main location for Jane Campion's 1993 period drama The Piano. A place of Maori myth, tribal genocide, emerald bush and sublime yet treacherous surf, it's also criss-crossed with ley lines. Youth's esoteric interests were piqued. "I was experimenting heavily with psychedelics and really into crystals at the time," says the producer today, "and this place was just brimming with magical energy."

But the mix of London hippy raver and guitar pop band wasn't an easy one. Time was lost while Youth searched for ➢

HOME COMFORTS

All the **CROWDED HOUSE** albums, rated by **ANDY FYFE**.

CROWDED HOUSE

CROWDED HOUSE

★★★

(Capitol, 1986)

Sparky debut, home to the everlasting Don't Dream It's Over. Alongside the jaunty pop of Something So Strong and Now We're Getting Somewhere are songs about suicide (Hole In The River) and obsessive love (Love You 'Til The Day I Die), extremes that contain all of Crowded House's fizzing essence.

Crowded House

TEMPLE OF LOW MEN

★★★★

(Capitol, 1988)

Left alone by Capitol after the success of Don't Dream…, Finn's natural melancholy poured through gems such as Into Temptation, Mansion In The Slums and Better Be Home Soon. One US critic called it "sanctimonious self-pity", entirely missing the point of the true fan's deep-cut album.

WOODFACE

★★★

(Capitol, 1991)

CROWDED HOUSE

The CSN-like Weather With You's radio ubiquity in 1992 cemented the band's future in the UK and Europe, but *Woodface* is a messy album. Half co-written with brother Tim, Chocolate Cake and There Goes God's goofiness sounds uncomfortable alongside the sublime Fall At Your Feet and Four Seasons In One Day.

TOGETHER ALONE

★★★★★

(Parlophone/Capitol, 1993)

Looser and almost psychedelic in places, this is the band's most cohesive statement. Log drummers and a Maori choir lend a briny South Pacific tang to several tracks, but the more trad guitar pop of Distant Sun is probably Finn's songwriting pinnacle, possibly even one of humankind's greatest musical moments.

CROWDED HOUSE
TIME ON EARTH
DELUXE EDITION

TIME ON EARTH

★★★

(Parlophone, 2007)

A grab bag of styles from the previous albums, the reunion album is symbolic of Seymour and Finn's emotional struggle after Hester's suicide. Although mostly written before his death, it's impossible not to read some prescience into lyrics from Don't Stop Now, such as, "something I can write about… something I can cry about".

Crowded House
INTRIGUER

INTRIGUER

★★★

(Fantasy/Universal, 2010)

'The quiet one' of the catalogue, but a fully collaborative album between Finn, Seymour and latter-day Housemate Mark Hart. Bouncy pop and pillowy ballads harked back to the old days, but with the members now in their fifties the themes were more reflective, less visceral, more solo McCartney than prime Beatles.

DREAMERS ARE WAITING

★★★★

(EMI/Universal, 2021)

Dreamers are waiting
CROWDED HOUSE

Even with Finn's sons Elroy and Liam and former producer Mitchell Froom now in the band, this sounds more like 'classic' Crowded House than either of the previous reunion albums. Love and family fill the songs with guilt and hope, the youngsters re-injecting a zing not heard since the debut.

< a crystal he'd buried near a waterfall, while Finn complains of "negative energy" and admits to dabbling with acid. He calls it a "vocational rather than recreational" choice. Youth, however, claims it was something the band and crew embraced.

"There was a night, pitch black, where we went for a barefoot walk down the track to the sea. I was in front, the others in a line with their hands on the one in front's shoulder, and as we went I started going faster and faster until we were all running through the dark forest, unable to see a thing, laughing our heads off. Amazing no one hit anything."

Seymour – whose marriage collapsed around the same time – was unimpressed by some of Youth's actual production work. He recalls Finn struggling with a difficult vocal take, and asking for feedback. The response: a light but unmistakable snoring coming from a couch in the control room. "I asked why he was sleeping and he just said, 'I was tired, man.'"

More surprising is Seymour's grudge against Richard Thompson, a friend of Froom's who had contributed the Django Reinhardt-style guitar solo on *Temple Of Low Men*'s Sister Madly. As with every Crowded House album, Seymour had painted the sleeve artwork for what was to be called *Together Alone*. This one was a triptych of Christ, Buddha and Muhammad in a car. When Thompson, a muslim since 1974, saw it, he objected in the strongest terms.

"We argued about religious censorship but he was completely correct," Seymour concedes. "Bearing in mind what happened at Charlie Hebdo, good thing too. But saying he found me 'personally offensive' was a bit much." Seymour repainted the cover with a curtain drawn across Muhammad's window.

T*OGETHER ALONE* CATAPULTED CROWDED HOUSE to another level of success, but it came at a cost. Hester had been struggling with depression for years, although his bandmates were only now beginning to see how deep the problem ran. He'd been increasingly unhappy during the recording of *Together Alone*, keeping a distance that eventually influenced the album title. Halfway through their 1994 North American tour, just before a show in Atlanta, the drummer quit.

"Everybody finds their breaking point," Finn says today, "and Paul had got into a spiral of too many days in strange midwest towns. We didn't really understand what was happening with him, but in some ways we were relieved that at least *something* had happened."

Getty (3)

"MY LIFE CHANGED AFTER KNOWING PAUL SO CLOSELY. I HAD TO WORK OUT A LOT ABOUT THE HUMAN CONDITION." NICK SEYMOUR

Let's busk again: (far left) Crowded House do MTV's Unplugged, 1990, with Tim Finn, far right; (above left) Finn's got soles, London 1991; (left) Paul Hester, 2000; (right, from right) Crowded House today, Nick Seymour, Elroy Finn, Mitchell Froom, Neil and Liam Finn.

"Paul was expecting his first child," adds Seymour, "and he was possibly in the early stages of becoming agoraphobic. He talked about not even wanting to leave the page of the [Melbourne street atlas] Melways he lived on. His mood swings and vulnerability were obviously enslaved to the band's schedule of every day having to look at Neil and me, and then act like nothing was wrong."

The remaining pair finished the tour with Wally Ingram deputising for Hester, borrowed from support act Sheryl Crow. But for Finn something fundamental shifted when his best friend left, and when he and Seymour reconvened to work up new songs something didn't gel for the songwriter. If it was going to be different, it had to be completely different.

Seymour, meanwhile, believed that with just one more album they could be the biggest band in the world. "We'd just got out of our contract with Capitol, I assumed we were going to sign to another big label and we'd suddenly be quite financially independent, recording a flagship album. Then Neil leaves. I waited a few weeks, thinking he'd change his mind."

Finn's course was set, however. "It was definitely pulling the plug on something, but I'm quite reactionary and restless by nature and I thought it best to stop while there was something left in the tank."

On November 24, 1996, Crowded House's valedictory Farewell To The World tour ended with a free concert on the steps of the Sydney Opera House in front of 250,000 people. Rejoined by Hester for a final performance, the experience was bittersweet: their biggest moment was also their last.

"The after-show for that wasn't great," says Finn ruefully. "There was a big club hired and we all turned up, but no one was in the mood to celebrate."

Worse was to come.

ON MARCH 26, 2005, PAUL HESTER WAS FOUND hanged from a tree in Elsternwick Park, near his Melbourne home, just 46. It was a decade since he'd left Crowded House, but it still felt like losing a bandmate.

"When he left the group it was hard not to be aware that he was in the middle of something very big," says Finn. "We hadn't seen much of Paul but it was good when we did. He'd been my best friend and it was deeply distressing."

"My life has really changed after knowing Paul so closely and dealing with the aftermath for his family and those that loved him," Seymour confides. "I had to try and work out a lot about the human condition and what 'fragile' means, but I never saw anything in him as being that morbid, never thought that it was threatening in regard of life and death."

Hester's death did, however, bring Finn and Seymour back together. Already in the middle of recording a solo album, Finn suggested Seymour come and play some bass. The songs had been largely written before Hester's death but the album, *Time On Earth*, resonated in such a way it became a memorial to their fallen Crowded Housemate. "Paul dying remains a deeply troubling time," Finn says. "Although there'd been a full stop put on Crowded House, we thought there was something more to be had or given to the band as a soulful experience, something to commemorate. It may be a strange reaction but it seemed right at the time."

Since then, there has been another Crowded House album – the seldom-spotted *Intriguer* in 2010 – solo Neil and Finn Brothers projects, the Pajama Club record with Finn's wife Sharon, charity album *7 Worlds Collide*, featuring Johnny Marr, Eddie Vedder and Radiohead's Phil Selway and Ed O'Brien, and 2018's *Lightsleeper*, recorded with son Liam.

Then, two years ago, Finn was asked to replace Lindsey Buckingham in Fleetwood Mac. Watching Mac fans respond to the band's old songs, he started to think that maybe there was not only worth in re-engaging with his own past, but creating a new present, too. Reconvening Crowded House in LA just before lockdown, the now five-piece (featuring Seymour, Finn's sons Liam on guitar and drummer Elroy, and Mitchell Froom on keyboards) recorded *Dreamers Are Waiting*, a lush and sure-footed album that nonetheless sparkles with a joy and energy that recalls the band's debut.

"I don't know where it fits in the canon as such, that will take time to figure out," Finn says, "but this iteration of the band is very exciting."

Even though his sons have backed him in various solo permutations, Finn thought they might scoff at the idea of joining Crowded House. Not for the first time in the group's story, he was wrong.

"I didn't understand why he waited so long to ask," says Liam. "Who other than Dad, Nick and Mitchell knows more about the band than us? Maybe when he gives up we'll just carry on as a family franchise."

"Ha!" barks Finn Sr at the idea. "Who knows, though? The Finn Family Singers. Why the fuck not?"

Sci-fi, soul and self-belief carried YOLA through chaos at home in Portishead, to Nashville, where Dan Auerbach and Sister Rosetta Tharpe have helped her connect with the source, and where the future is finally within reach. "Just commit and that shit is yours," she tells BILL DeMAIN.

Photography by **JIM HERRINGTON**

PEERING AT THE HIPSTERS AROUND THE SWIMMING POOL AT THE DIVE MOTEL, a refashioned 1950s-era motor lodge in east Nashville, Yola looks like a visiting Romulan ambassador. The bright May day illuminates her green, yellow and black striped dress, lavender-tinged tresses and two angular slashes of electric green eye shadow. As we step into one of the hotel's kitschy rooms for our interview, it turns out that the topic of Star Trek is not only a quick path to the 37-year-old singer's heart, but a good frame for understanding her music.

"I grew up on Star Trek: Next Gen," she says. "I just love the Data character, his relationship with everyone and the quest for what is humanity and human nature. Science fiction and art ask the big questions."

And it turns out that sci-fi has a bearing Yola's new album, *Stand For Myself*.

"It's written from the point of view of an 'other'," she says. "In this particular case, not an android, but a black lady. Someone who maybe their humanity isn't seen clearly and needs to tell some stories about that humanity for people to understand the lens through which they live."

The stories on her second full-length record match themes of feminine strength and longing for connection with widescreen arrangements that surround her controlled-fire vocals ("My restraint might be a British thing," she says) with a summery collage of classic vibes – from Motown '65 to doo wop to lush countrypolitan – or what Yola calls "de-genred pop".

"What I do sits on the nexus of a number of aesthetics," she explains, with professorial flair. "Think of Minnie Riperton. How do you categorise something like Les Fleurs? It's not straight-up soul, not psych-jazz. Randy Newman is the same way. So many streams run through his music. That's what I want to do. My aim is for people to go, 'Oh, that's Yola-like,' in the same way they'd say, 'That's Randy Newman-like.'"

THAT'S VERY MUCH IN KEEPING WITH HOW YOUNG YOLANDA QUARTEY EXPERIENCED music as a latchkey kid who loved '90s radio. Raised by a single mother in Portishead, near Bristol, she sang along with Brownstone and A Tribe Called Quest as easily as she did Pulp and Blur. But it was a pair of ➢

Jim Herrington, With thanks to The Dive Motel, Nashville, TN

Yola at The Dive Motel, Nashville, May 12, 2021, on the road to self-actualisation: "I'm going to learn something in every environment that I'm in, then use that to identify the things that I'm born to." .

Yola
WALK THROUGH FIRE
Yola
STAND FOR MYSELF

Standing for herself: (clockwise from top left) Yolanda Quartey with Phantom Limb, December 2011; The Dive Motel, Nashville, May 2021; with Smokey Robinson at the 62nd Grammys, LA, January 2020; her albums; on-stage at Glastonbury with Massive Attack, 2008; (opposite, main) in Amsterdam, November 12, 2019; (insets) Sister Rosetta Tharpe; with Dan Auerbach, Nashville, 2019.

Jim Herrington, Getty (5)

< vintage LPs that helped unlock her voice.

"There was a compilation album of Ella Fitzgerald, and I sang my way from top to bottom," she says, in an accent more southern English than West Country. "I can still sing the whole record in sequence, to this day. It was so playful. Ella had surprising amounts of gravel for someone that was smooth. When you hear her sing Sunshine Of Your Love with a big band, it's just sublime."

The other record was Aretha Franklin's 1972 epic, *Young, Gifted And Black*. "That was so important," she says, "because I'd never heard a record addressed to me before so specifically, growing up in England where black people are even more of a minority."

Music was also her escape from a difficult home situation. "My mother had all the traits of a clinical psychopath, bar the actual murder list," Yola says. "That did exist, but she just never did it (*laughs*). She'd sleep with a gun under her pillow. She was ready to go, you know? I didn't have the luxury of time to just have this kid's life. I had to friggin' snap the fuck out of it, day one, and be *on*. Having to develop a little quicker, you get the ability to be able to think on your feet."

By the time she was 14, Yola had her first gig, singing standards with a jazz band in Bristol. It was the start of a decade-and-a-half apprenticeship that found her top-lining for London DJs, touring with broken beats collective Bugz In The Attic and, in 2008, fronting fellow Bristolians Massive Attack.

"No matter what I was involved in, I always kept something back for the eventuality of doing my own thing," she says. "I would think, 'OK, I'm going to learn something in every environment that I find myself in, then I'll use that to identify the things that I'm born to.'"

She refrained from putting her name to a solo project, despite many offers. "It's easy to get hoodwinked into doing something that doesn't represent musically what you want to put forward," she says.

Massive Attack is a prime example. Listening to live clips of her sing lead with the band, you can hear her dialling down her vocal wattage to a polite whisper. "They're minimalists. Everyone knows minimalism is a big part of their aesthetic and what makes their music beautiful. But if you listen to my records, you might notice, I'm a maximalist! (*laughs*)"

It should be noted that Yola's laugh is also maximal – an aisle-rolling blast of bawdy mirth that she freely unleashes. It's the laugh of someone who's come out the other side of some dark times – in her case, a brief spell of homelessness, a house fire, and two interludes where she stopped singing.

"The first hiatus, for a year and a half, was forced, because of having vocal nodes," she says. "The second, my mother was dying."

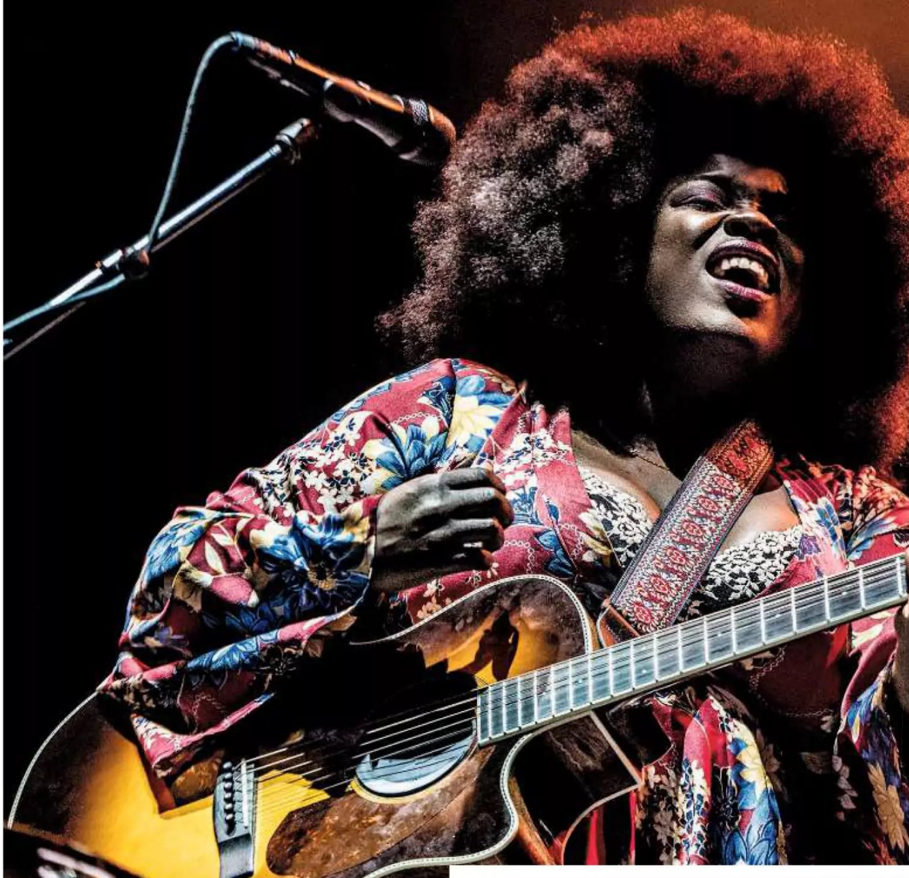
The latter break allowed her to recalibrate her path forward. "The time with my mother gave me a line in the sand. I thought, 'I've got to put the jetpack on and live my best life!' It's hard to go out on your own and use none of the contacts you ever had and find an environment that's going to allow you, as a black woman in England, to self-actualise."

IN 2010, YOLA VISITED NASHVILLE FOR THE FIRST time, and it was love at first collaboration. "It's been a magic place for me," she says. "A mix of socialising and work, and serendipitous bumping into people on the street that spark different conversations."

Her publisher was sending her on regular writing trips to Los Angeles and New York, to network and plant seeds for a solo recording career. While the bigger cities allowed her to work with big names, including Katy Perry, it was Nashville that won her over.

"In LA, I found it hard to feel like I was ever in something. New York, I definitely felt like I was in something, but it's almost too much of something (*laughs*). The balance is in Nashville, where you're in something, but there's space and perspective to see what you're in."

After briefly fronting UK Americana band Phantom Limb ("It was a bit too bro," she says), she started writing with Dan Auerbach.



"MY MOTHER WOULD SLEEP WITH A GUN UNDER HER PILLOW. I DIDN'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF THIS KID'S LIFE." Yola

The Black Keys' frontman produced her 2019 solo debut, *Walk Through Fire*, enlisting an all-star team of session cats and legends of soul songcraft such as John Bettis and Dan Penn. Even in such exalted company, Auerbach was eager for Yola to assert her personality.

"With some of the co-writes, it was almost like Dan wanted to see my face more," she says with a laugh. "But I'd be like, 'Buddy, are you kidding me?!'"

For *Stand For Myself*, they assembled a larger – and younger – pool of collaborators, including Jack White backing singer Ruby Amanfu and neo-soft rocker Aaron Lee Tasjan, whose recent *Tasjan! Tasjan! Tasjan!* long-player was championed by Elton John. "There were things that I could talk about more easily," says Yola. The result was songs that touched on isolation and difficult family dynamics, while effervescent lead single Diamond Studded Shoes may be the chooglin'est song about economic divisions we'll hear in 2021.

"It's important to be in spaces where there's more than one woman, where there's more than one person of colour, where there are people from different backgrounds and sexual persuasions," Yola says. "You have people delivering their understanding of otherness. That added so much richness to the record."

As did Yola's first major extracurricular project, playing Sister Rosetta Tharpe in Baz Luhrmann's upcoming Elvis biopic, untitled as MOJO went to press. "First, I thought it would just be really powerful to represent a creator of rock'n'roll music," says Yola. "And that was like, no pressure, right? (*laughs*) But it was transformative almost for the opposite reason that I expected. Not for what it's saying to the world, but what it said to me as an artist of colour."

Yola's career quandary – where to go after a well-received debut that could nonetheless have defined her limits as a retro-soul stylist – was challenged by her brush with Tharpe.

"This role said you can keep on growing, you can be the genesis of something massive," she says. "Just commit and that shit is yours. I felt imbued with that when it came time to do this record. I felt like I'd been immersed not only in the birth of rock'n'roll but in the definition of self-actualisation."

There's that word again. When MOJO jokes that she must be the first soul singer ever to reference Abraham Maslow more often Aretha, Yola laughs. "Self-actualisation is important! Because, you know… what else are we doing here on this planet?" Ⓜ

"SHE'S UNAFRAID TO TELL HER STORY"

Producer and Black Key **Dan Auerbach** on the wonder of Yola.

"WE FIRST met in a co-writing session. I was immediately impressed with her voice and the ease with which we were able to come up with songs together. She's unafraid to tell her story and get personal. She's very instinctual. Sometimes, with an artist, you run into a bunch of traffic, like something's holding them back. With Yola, it's always forward momentum.

"The big change for this album is that she went from not really touring to making a living touring. Naturally, you start to want to have songs that play to bigger rooms – more uptempo, dance-y things. She's great in the studio. I've never worked with a singer who knew so much about her vocal cords (*laughs*). Also, I have a lot of vintage gear at Easy Eye, which complements the timeless thing she does. We recorded during the pandemic, but it was easy – tested every morning, and kept it to three or four people in the building at a time. Looking ahead, I'll always be here to aid Yola in whatever capacity she needs from me. That's what my job is. Step in when I need to, step out when I need to. So far things have been going swimmingly."

As told to Bill DeMain

The Family way: Roger Chapman, circa 1973. "I will accept other people's point of view on my music… as long as it coincides with mine."

BLACK SHEEP OF THE FAMILY

Tearaway Teddy Boy to prog-hating progger in rock's least predictable band: **FAMILY** firebrand **ROGER CHAPMAN** does what he likes and damn the torpedoes. Not the safest career strategy, but one that means he rocks stoically on, 60-odd years since he started. "I can't switch my mind off from creating," he tells **JIM IRVIN**.

Portrait: **MICHAEL PUTLAND**.

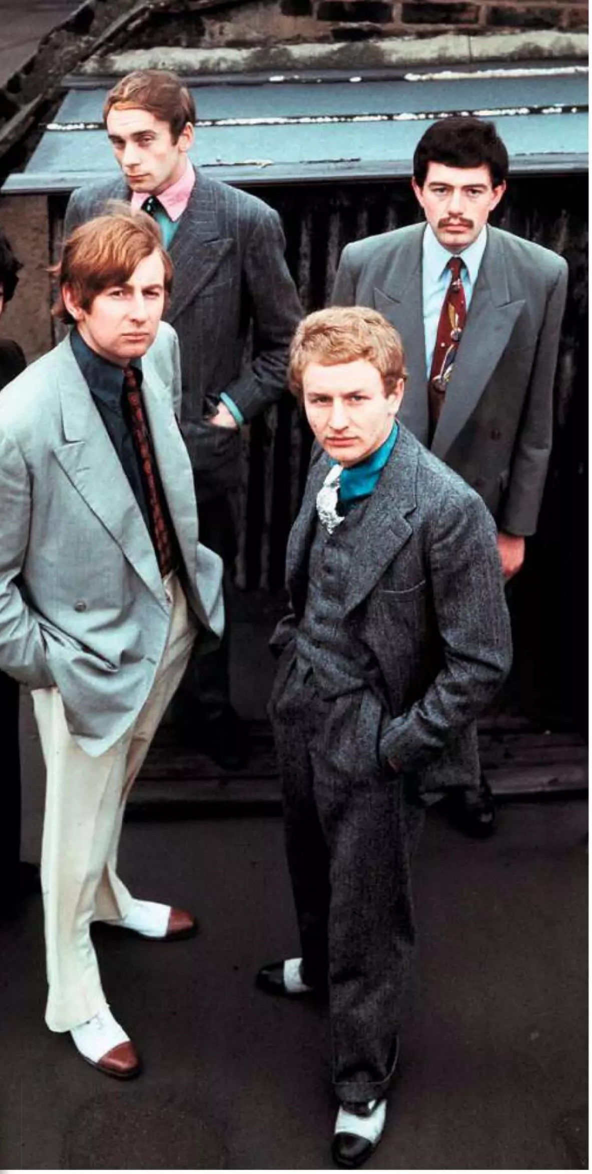
◆

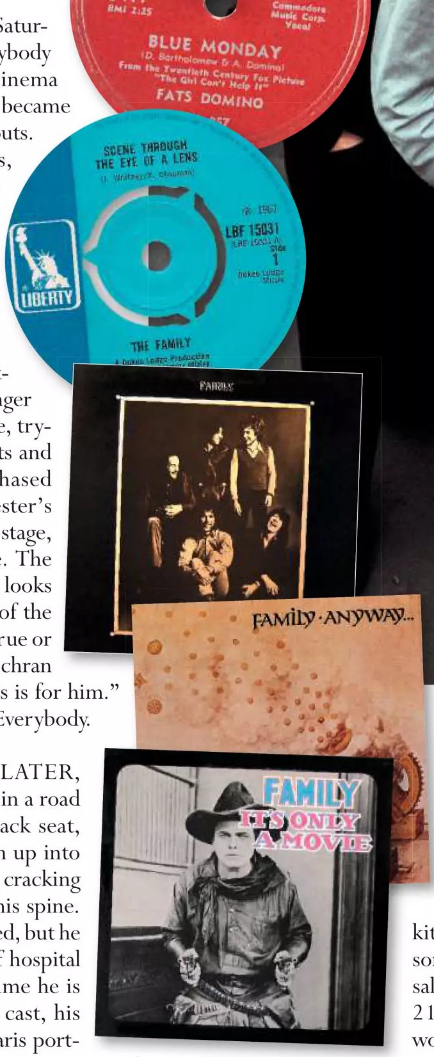
EASTER MONDAY, APRIL 17, 1960. AS PART OF THE LOCAL BANK holiday amusement, the Palais De Danse on Humberstone Gate in Leicester is holding an afternoon hop. Coming on stage are Palais regulars The Rockin' Rs, regarded as one of the city's best rock'n'roll outfits, scrappy but authentic, with an intense frontman, 18 years old for just over a week: Roger Chapman. Chapman has already established a reputation for tearing through Little Richard, Gene Vincent and Fats Domino numbers in blue suede brothel-creepers and a long black drape jacket, occasioning one outraged fellow performer to complain to the Palais' promoter about his hiring "a dirty old Ted… with a voice like a cheese grater".

Galvanised by Fats Domino's Blue Monday aged 14, Chapman began his audio odyssey drawn to the humid New Orleans grooves that jazz players brought to the early R&B records, grooves which bubbled up in Memphis behind Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash. When he sang these songs, he just let it all out, his timing and tuning naturally good, his tone raw and loud. He impressed at local talent contests, until a punter asked him to join his band, which became The Rockin' Rs.

Home was a mess, Chapman's father having left before he was two (Roger and older brother Tony had spells in care). Off-stage, he hung with a tough crowd led by Tex (Terence) Brown and Dougie Wilcox, two notorious Leicester Teds who, at weekends, would lead sorties to the surrounding villages to duff up their teenaged inhabitants: football hooliganism without the football. ➤

Getty





(Top left) Chapman on-stage in 1966; (above, from left) first Family, 1967, Charlie Whitney, Harry Ovenall, Chapman, Ric Grech and Jim King; (insets left) inspiring Fats, first single, Family albums; (opposite page, from left) Roger the roar prepares to lob the mikestand, Alexandra Palace, 1973; Family on the Old Grey Whistle Test, 1971 (from left) John Wetton, Whitney, Chapman, Rob Townsend, John 'Poli' Palmer.

≺ "It was egos on a Friday and Saturday night and then on Sunday everybody calmed down and went to the cinema with a bird," recalls Chapman. "I became the junior division of these older louts. Except they weren't really louts, they were really intelligent people stuck in an environment they couldn't get out of."

Tex's gang introduced Chapman to Hank Williams and rockabilly and encouraged him to twitch around on-stage like a rope made entirely of nerve. By this Easter Monday, however, the young singer has started to let the Ted look slide, trying Italian tailoring, mohair jackets and winkle-pickers, tasty gear purchased from Weaver To Wearer in Leicester's town centre. As he heads for the stage, he is beckoned over by someone. The guy whispers in his ear. Chapman looks dazed as he wanders out in front of the crowd. "Er, I don't know if this is true or not, but I just heard that Eddie Cochran has been killed in a car crash. This is for him." The Rockin' R's tear into C'Mon Everybody.

JUST A FEW MONTHS LATER, Chapman is himself involved in a road accident. Unbelted in the back seat, the force of the crash rockets him up into the car's roof, crushing his neck, cracking several vertebrae and dislocating his spine. Luckily, his spinal cord is not severed, but he has to endure almost two years of hospital visits and operations. For some time he is encased from head-to-waist in a cast, his face peeking out of a plaster-of-Paris porthole, like a diver's helmet. But being a teenager, he wants to continue going out and having a good time. Others might have feared ridicule, but as wingman to some of the hardest nuts in Leicester, Chapman thinks little of it. Indeed, during another night at the Palais he is persuaded to take the stage once again. Thus the crowd witnesses what looks like the ghost of an undersea explorer hollering Ray Charles's What'd I Say as if nothing were amiss.

"That's the music that really got me, that kind of R&B," says Chapman, 61 years on, still betrothed to rock music and just about to release a new album. "It still sounds really happening to me. Just fantastic stuff."

Leaving school at 15, Chapman, a bright, creative kid, wanted to attend art school. "But they said I couldn't, stuck a paint pot in my hand and told me to be a decorator," he says. "I hated that. The way they did that to me has stuck with me for over 60 years."

At 19, getting his 17-year-old girlfriend pregnant meant a shotgun wedding and a life mapped out like a kitchen-sink tragedy. But the car accident had generated some insurance money, £2,000 – twice the average annual salary then – held in trust until he turned 21. Thus, on his 21st birthday, April 8, 1963, Chapman announced he wouldn't be clocking on any more but would be turning pro as a musician. He joined local band The Strollers, among them teen bassist Ric Grech, and turned them into The X-Citers, drawing a set from songs by Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the music coming out on UK import label, Sue. This made The X-Citers one of the most forward-facing bands in Leicester, if not the country, and Chapman was soon spotted by a resourceful manager, Reg Calvert, who invited The X-Citers to join his stable of all the talents – The Fortunes, Screaming Lord Sutch – housed at Clifton Hall, a former stately home near Rugby. Chapman was renamed Jimmy Stephens and his band became The Jackpots.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR CHAPMAN TO REALISE THAT the packaged-pop life wasn't for him and that Calvert was the only one likely to benefit from the whole charade. (Calvert was shot dead in 1966 in a dispute with a rival pirate radio entrepre-

Getty (3), Shutterstock

"I CAN'T SAY FAMILY TRIED TO BE ANYTHING OR DO ANYTHING. WE JUST WROTE THESE SONGS, AND DID THEM THE WAY WE LIKED THEM." ROGER CHAPMAN

neur). He retreated back to Leicester where Ric Grech had joined James King And The Farinas, who impressed Chapman with their homespun arrangements of Motown and R&B songs. Grech thought Chapman should join. Quirky frontman Jim King wanted to develop his sax playing, so a deal was struck whereby Chapman could join if he bought a sax and taught himself to play. He and King would join together for brass riffs and then take turns singing.

The band was good and London beckoned. They changed their name to The Roaring Sixties and adopted a kind of '40s gangster look, wearing second-hand demob suits. Turning up dressed this way at a recording session with producer Kim Fowley, the American said they looked like "the Family", meaning the Mafia. The others thought that would be a better name for the band. Chapman thought it was a stupid idea, but The Family they became.

The band's new manager, John Gilbert, hustled them a deal with Liberty for one single, Scene Through The Eye Of A Lens, released in October 1967. Gilbert also made the unusual management decision to initiate Chapman and King into LSD by slipping a tab in a bottle of champagne at a trendy Italian restaurant. "John was quite scared of me because I could be firm. Let's put it that way: not aggressive, firm," says Chapman. "I didn't agree with people telling me what to do. Maybe the acid was his way of softening me up a bit so he could order me about!"

Subsequently, Motown and mohair were out and multicoloured threads and joss-sticks were in, an overnight revamp of the stage act which briefly confused hometown fans but made Family prime candidates for gigs at London's 'underground' venues. They quickly became a name to drop. Beatles and Stones came to watch them play. That reaction enabled Gilbert to score Family a very lucrative worldwide deal with American label Reprise.

With the same carefree spirit that he'd brought to his singing from the start, Chapman started improvising words over the complex chord sequences brought to him by double-necked guitarist John 'Charlie' Whitney. "We just did it quite naturally," recalls Chapman. "Some of the guys were influenced by jazz, me mainly by rock. It just came together. I can't say we ever tried to be anything or do anything. We just wrote these songs, and did them the way we liked them."

On Family's debut album, July 1968's *Music In A Doll's House* they were playing to the gallery of the underground circuit, but second album *Family Entertainment*, released nine months later, was something else, a thoroughly original mash-up of their origins, with Chapman writing lyrics about life's tapestry on future hit single The Weaver's Answer, complete with jazzy sax solo and Leslie-d guitars. One of Ric Grech's songs asked whether Chinese communist leader Zhou Enlai ever got high. Charlie Whitney wrote an evocative instrumental harking back to the Summer Of '67 and Processions, a song about a kid building sandcastles and dreaming of his future. But the band were annoyed when Gilbert mixed the record while they toured and credited himself as co-producer (with Glyn Johns). Chapman particularly disliked the chirping woodwinds on Hung Up Down, even though they'd been arranged by an uncredited John Barry.

APART FROM MAKING A NOISE AND SEEING IF anyone liked it, there was barely any logic to Family's plan. For a start, Chapman's voice was like no other in rock. Variously described as "hircine", "eye-watering", "unforgettable" and "quite extraordinary to be in a room with", its considerable volume, sandpapered tone and emphatic vibrato was strong meat in this time before heavy metal. Furthermore, his street-hardened side emerged in an electrifying stage act, thumping and splintering hapless tambourines, destroying mikestands and generally losing himself in his work. It got the band a reputation for being a wild night out. Ric Grech wondered aloud in the press as they prepared to visit the US for the first time, in April 1969: "I worry that [the Americans] are going to flip when they see Roger on-stage, 'cos he's so violent."

That American tour was not a success. Soon after they arrived, the band were informed that Grech had been poached by Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood for their new supergroup, Blind Faith. Former Animals man John Weider was hastily drafted in. Chapman's performing style, possibly exacerbated by his frustration at the sudden personnel change, did indeed freak out some crowds and ➢

Family portrait, 1968 (from left) Chapman, Whitney, King (seated), Townsend, Grech.

critics. It also summoned the hair-triggered wrath of promoter Bill Graham who, watching from the wings at the Fillmore West, was nearly taken out by a mikestand that Chapman carelessly javelinned off stage. Despite subsequent lengthy tours supporting Elton John, where significant numbers of Family fans showed up at the coastal gigs, the band never managed to crack America.

It was a different story at home. For instance, it was generally thought that they blew the Stones off stage at Hyde Park in July '69. "That wasn't hard," reckons Chapman today, bursting into wheezy laughter. Firmly established at the centre of the London scene, Chapman shared a Fulham flat with roommates Jenny Fabian, a young journalist whose controversial novel, Groupie, was known to be based on Family's backstage exploits, and Sam Hutt, a rising rock'n'roll doctor later to become UK country singer Hank Wangford.

By late '69, Jim King was becoming ever more unpredictable, succumbing to a drug habit that made him increasingly hard to accommodate. Keyboard, flute and vibraphone player, John 'Poli' Palmer, former drummer with Blossom Toes, was invited to replace King, having impressed Family while making a guest appearance with them at the Royal Festival Hall. Third album *A Song For Me*, was released in January 1970, while a remix of fan favourite The Weaver's Answer drove the three-song Strange Band maxi-single to Number 11 in the charts that August. There was some mumbling about Family selling out. Chapman agrees 'selling out' is a concept that is irrelevant today. "It was probably irrelevant then, too. To us anyway. You had to make money to keep a band together."

Despite constant line-up instability – John Weider was let go after fourth album *Anyway* and replaced by melodic young bass player and singer, John Wetton – Family seemed to be ascending into the premier league. The 1971 Melody Maker Readers Poll put them in the company of Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, The Who and Pink Floyd, one place above the Stones. Chapman was voted Britain's third best singer, just below Robert Plant and Joe Cocker. In the music press, Family were considered prime exponents of progressive rock because their songs could go anywhere – loud, quiet, mellow, heavy or humorous – but the tag didn't mean much to the band.

"To be honest, we were never progressive, as it has come to be known," says Chapman, "But there were so many avenues to go down. We could be anything from Thelonious Monk to Joni Mitchell, and everything in between."

Rousing single In My Own Time climbed to Number 4. Excellent, extravagantly packaged albums *Fearless* and *Bandstand* kept them in the charts. But while similarly tough to categorise acts like Jethro Tull were becoming household names around the world, Family had to be content with reasonable success at home and in parts of Europe. When they appeared in Italy, visiting surrealist Salvador Dali was photographed holding a gig poster and urging people to go and see them.

Chapman says he never resented the more visible successes of his peers. "Good luck to anybody who can make it in this profession. It's a difficult life for young musicians, just to get through all the people who are waiting there with their claws out, you know? We didn't have the drive to be fucking giants, anyway. We only had the drive to make music. In some ways that's derogatory, but in others it's really quite admirable. My drive is always to beat whoever's trying to stop me from doing something."

At a time when many bands would go out for £350 a night, Family were asking £1,000, and filling the venues. Lack of ambition wasn't holding them back, but there may have been too much living in the moment: "When we went out as Family we were usually stoned out of our brains, at least two of us completely and utterly fucking gone," says Chapman.

Bandstand contained Burlesque, their most accessible rocker in a while and a hit single. Yet somehow this supposedly progressive band weren't getting anywhere. Indeed, they were being leapfrogged by younger bands they'd influenced, like Genesis and Queen. John Wetton left to join King Crimson and was replaced by future Rod Stewart sidekick Jim Cregan. Poli Palmer also bowed out, feeling he was drifting apart from the others and that they'd done all they could together. He was replaced by boozy, barrelhouse

Alamy, Getty, Graham Trott

CLAN-TASTIC

FAMILY AND BEYOND: CHAPMAN CHERRY-PICKED BY JIM IRVIN.

FAMILY
★★★★
Music In A Doll's House
(Reprise, 1968)

A Brit-psych classic, establishing the band as unusual, inventive writers and their singer as a one-off who could do sinister, stirring or soulful as the fancy took him. Comes with strings arranged by a young Mike Batt (his first gig) and a cameo from Brit jazz legend Tubby Hayes.

FAMILY
★★★★★
Family Entertainment
(Reprise, 1969)

Opening with the meandering folk-jazz of The Weaver's Answer, some argue this record is the birthplace of progressive rock, such is the invention and vision on show in unusual songs by Chapman, Whitney and soon-to-depart bass, violin and voice man Ric Grech, each track bang on trend and trying something new with the form.

FAMILY
★★★★
Bandstand
(Reprise, 1972)

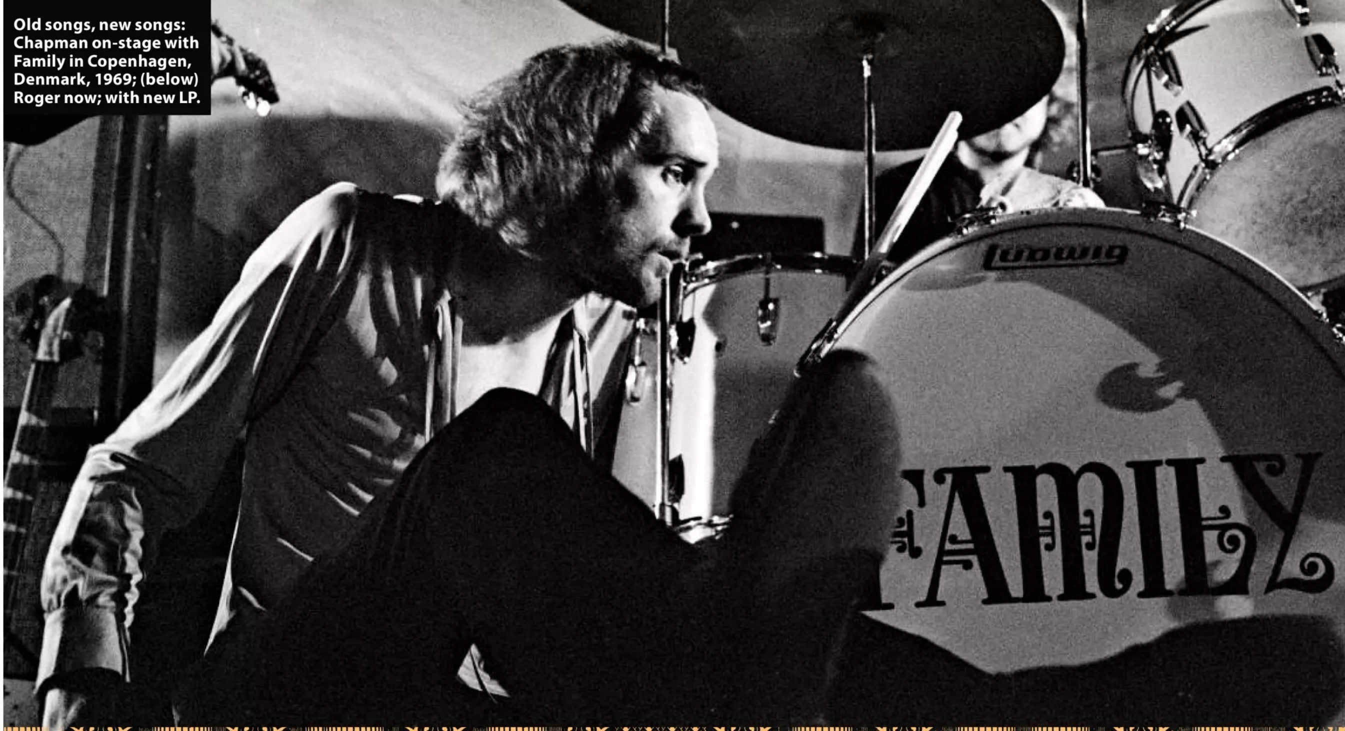
Still refusing to do what's expected, Family find their best-ever filthy groove in hit single Burlesque, sound oddly like their followers Genesis on Coronation, write an acoustic classic in My Friend The Sun, and close on a career high with Top Of The Hill. Their label dropped them soon after its release.

STREETWALKERS
★★★★
Red Card
(Vertigo, 1976)

Chapman and Whitney join forces with world class players Bobby Tench, Jon Plotel and Nicko McBrain, for tight-but-loose rock with added swamp: the loping Me And Me Horse And Me Rum; added boogie: Daddy Rolling Stone; or added strings: the widescreen Decadence Code. A confident album as unclassifiable as anything Family ever recorded.

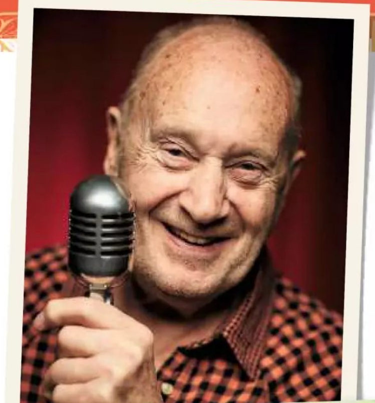
ROGER CHAPMAN
★★★
Chappo
(Acrobat, 1979)

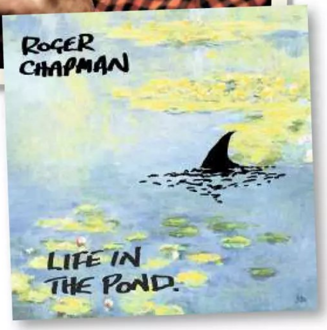
Guided by producer David Courtney, Chapman and top session players deliver a lighter, more focused and accessible work than usual, including his own bluesy staple Moth To A Flame and standards picked to show off his soulful chops – Tim Hardin's evergreen Hang On To A Dream and Leiber & Stoller's Keep Forgettin'. Its success abroad means he's been pointing that way ever since.



Old songs, new songs: Chapman on-stage with Family in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1969; (below) Roger now; with new LP.

> "ROGER SAYS IT HIMSELF – IF HE HADN'T JOINED A BAND HE'D HAVE ENDED UP IN JAIL. HE'D HAVE BEEN A LOST SOUL." POLI PALMER





piano man Tony Ashton. It was like swapping caviar for mince and onions.

"That's exactly right," says Chapman, laughing. "By that point we were thinking, Let's just get someone who can stand on the stage, play his arse off and make the band groove. We were heading in a kind of New Orleans direction, doing Huey 'Piano' Smith covers in our set."

Family's contract with Reprise wasn't renewed. Ashton produced 1973's *It's Only A Movie* for new label Raft. Yes it grooved, here and there, but their new, Faces-style goodtime sound wasn't firing anyone's imagination. "It didn't take too long for it to become really boring," Chapman admits today. "We became like a fucking pub band. It wasn't inventive any more. That's when I said, I've had enough of this."

FAMILY PLAYED A FAREWELL TOUR THAT ended, naturally, with two emotional shows in Leicester. Chapman and Whitney launched new band Streetwalkers aiming, it seemed, at the kind of macho, R&B-based rock Paul Rodgers' new band Bad Company would use to fill stadiums. Streetwalkers did indeed thrive in places which had ignored Family, but as Chapman puts it, his homeland "gave me the arse". Four years in, punk and new wave hastened Streetwalkers' end. After 12 years together, Chapman and Whitney finally called it quits.

Chapman remembers being in a bad place for about 18 months after Streetwalkers ended, giving short shrift to several record companies who approached him to be another Rod Stewart. But a day helping out former Love Affair singer Steve Ellis introduced him to producer Dave Courtney, which led to a solo album, 1979's *Chappo*, and a solid career mostly focused on Germany, Australia and those corners of the world where old school, blues-derived rock is still appreciated, a focus Chapman pursues to this day, despite several farewell gigs in the last decade. "I've had quite a few of those," he laughs. "But what else am I going to do? Sit at home all day and do nothing? I can't switch my mind off from creating. I'm always writing songs."

His new album has reunited him with Poli Palmer. The former Family vibes man produced *Life In The Pond* between his home studio in Malvern and visits to Chapman in Sheen, south-west London. Chapman enjoyed the process and is clearly thrilled with the result. Amazingly, at 79, his voice is holding up, though it's perhaps not quite as huge as it once was. "When I was young, I had 300 per cent. Now, it's down to about 90 per cent," he reckons.

Palmer, who has known Chapman for over 60 years, shared a flat with him for several of those and joined Family primarily because he loved his singing, knows that music still means the world to his old mate.

"Underneath it all, Roger's an old softie," he says affectionately. "But he admits it himself, if he hadn't joined a band he'd have ended up in jail. He'd have been a lost soul without music. Discovering American blues was a life-saver to him. He's not going to stop doing it now."

Chapman, meanwhile, harbours no illusions about his place in the music universe or his reasons for continuing. "I don't profess to be a fucking star. I just get on a stage and sing things I like. I'm not doing it for anybody else. I'm selfish like that."

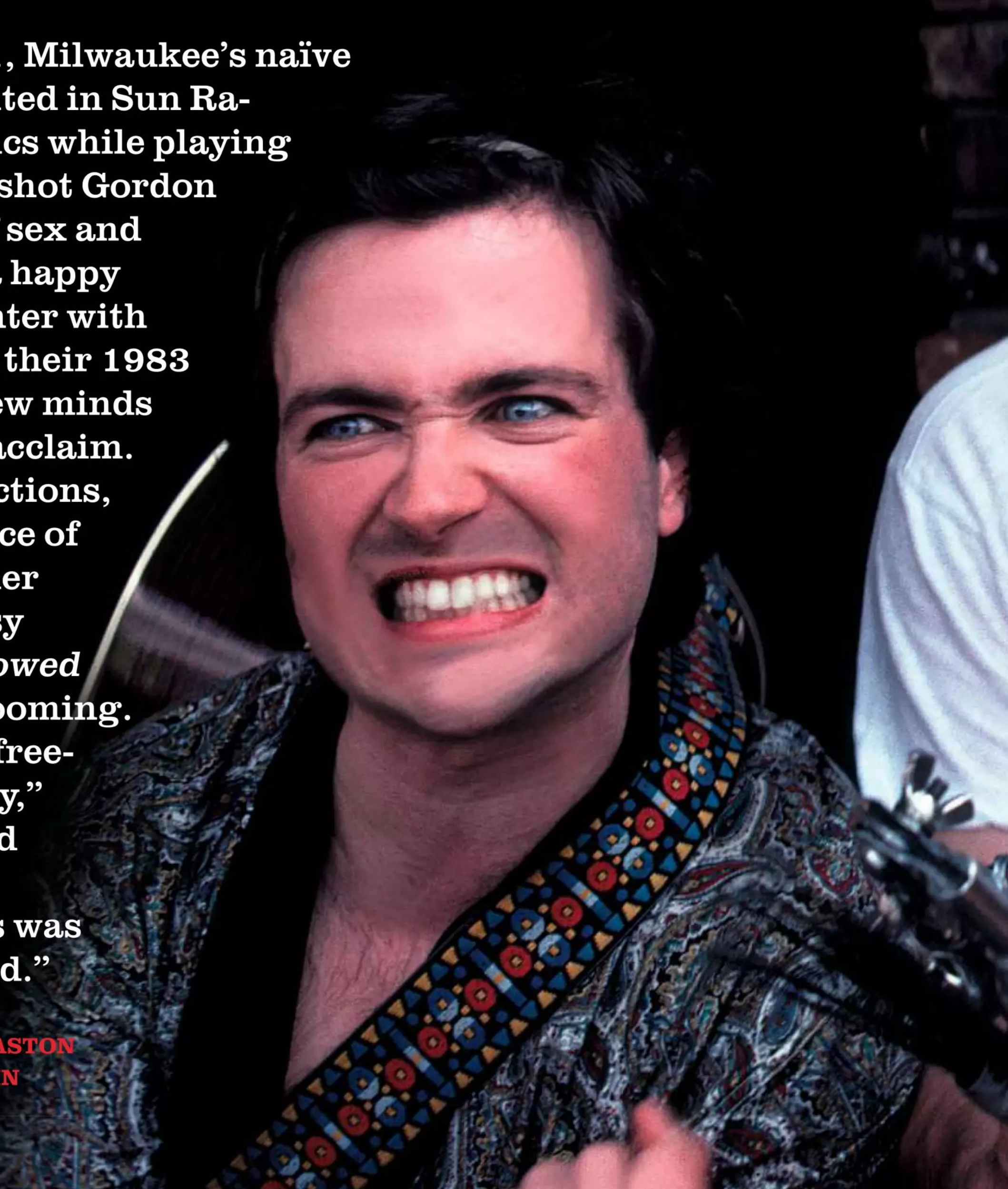
He pauses. "I *will* accept other people's point of view on my music… As long as it coincides with mine!"

The wheezy laugh says the rest. C'mon everybody.

VIOLENT FEMMES BLISTER IN THE SUN

Alive from 1981, Milwaukee's naïve folk-punks exulted in Sun Ra-inspired theatrics while playing high school hotshot Gordon Gano's songs of sex and longing. After a happy busking encounter with the Pretenders, their 1983 debut album blew minds and found cult acclaim. But internal frictions, plus the influence of Jesus and murder ballads on rootsy second LP *Hallowed Ground*, were looming. "They had that free-jazz, wild energy," say the band and their intimates. "But selfishness was coming to a head."

Interviews by **MARTIN ASTON**
Portrait by **PAUL NATKIN**



Kinky Aggro: Violent Femmes cavort outside Tuts venue, Chicago, June 30, 1983 (from left) Gordon Gano, Victor DeLorenzo, Brian Ritchie.

Paul Natkin/Getty

Victor DeLorenzo: Brian [Ritchie, bassist] and I were working as a rhythm section, which Brian had named Violent Femmes, backing various Milwaukee musicians.

Brian Ritchie: I was a first-generation punk but I'd played in a big band at school, then jazz, polka and neo-psychedelia, which seems weird but it familiarised me with a lot of different styles. One guy we backed was a real railway hobo, Doorway Dave. Victor was touring with a theatre group in Europe when I met Gordon. A friend said I had to check out this "pint-sized Lou Reed imitator" who wrote his own songs.

Gordon Gano: My father played guitar and sang, sometimes country songs, and given he was a Baptist minister, there were church songs too. My brother got me into punk and the Velvets. When I was 15, he took me to see Johnny Thunders and The Heartbreakers, still the greatest rock'n'roll experience of my life.

BR: Gordon was amazing. He had lots of energy and was pretty out there, especially for a high school student.

GG: At high school, I was considered peculiar. People wanted to beat me up, but didn't. I was shy,

System Of A Dressing Gown: clockwise from main (from left) Ritchie, DeLorenzo and Gano play on the streets in Chicago; backstage in '84 with saxman Peter Balestrieri (right); Gano and Ritchie on-stage; the *Hallowed Ground* and *Violent Femmes* long-players.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

● **Gordon Gano (singer/guitarist)**

● **Brian Ritchie (bassist)**

● **Victor DeLorenzo (drummer)**

● **Mark Van Hecke (producer)**

● **Peter Balestrieri (saxophonist)**

● **John Kruth (multi-instrumentalist associate of the band)**

● **Geoff Travis (Rough Trade label founder)**

≺ combined with a willingness to stand out. I started wearing a bathrobe over my clothes to school every Monday, like, "You got me out of bed for this?" But I also liked sport and going to church.

VDL: Coming from The Velvet Underground and other esoterica in jazz and country, I appreciated the uniqueness of Gordon's writing, about the adolescent condition, in a clear-cut, emotional way. It wasn't autobiographical, but he let you into little secrets. I think we kept the jewels [sic] of our personalities hidden, which led to problems later on, but initially it made for a quirky collection of individuals.

BR: We practised in Victor's basement, and rarely saw sunlight, so I wanted to take it out on the street, as Victor and I had done with Doorway Dave, and we convinced Gordon to try it. Playing acoustically too was better for the music, because it let out Gordon's refined lyrics and excellent storytelling.

GG: I'd have probably gone for two electric guitars, bass and drums, but Brian and Victor brought in different kinds of instruments and a way of playing that was essential to how the band sounded. .

VDL: I'd studied drums with a contemporary of Buddy Rich, who taught me the beauty of playing with brushes. After I met Brian, I adapted my style to play standing up. I soon added what I called the Tranceophone, a combined metal basket and a floor tom, with a "ping" and a "thump" amongst its distinctive sounds. But getting shows was hard – clubs in Milwaukee were geared toward hair metal.

VDL: Brian had this giant Mariachi bass and I had my snare. One afternoon, we busked under the marquee of the Oriental Theatre where the Pretenders were playing [August 23, 1981].

GG: [Guitarist] James Honeyman-Scott had gone out to the drugstore and heard us. Chrissie Hynde said we could play a few songs between the support act and them.

VDL: Depends on who you ask, we went down very well, or horribly. Half the audience, anyway, had seen us busking and probably thought, "Hey, these weird psychedelic farmers, purveyors of folk-punk, are legit now!" But the next day, we were still busking.

Peter Balestrieri: I was working at The Jazz Gallery club in Milwaukee, where Violent Femmes really began, on Tuesday nights when there were no jazz bookings. The thing I noticed was the crowd were all women, on their feet, mouthing every word. I never really understood it, except that the band had an androgynous look. Gordon and Vincent had a habit of wearing their mother's accessories, like long gloves or a fox stole, and Brian wore long drop earrings. They were hammy and theatrical, talking to each other and goofing around.

John Kruth: I was living in New York City. A friend from Milwaukee called and said, "You gotta see this band, they'll wipe you out." I hadn't seen a band like that since The Who or The Doors, in that you just didn't know what would happen. A riot could have broken out, or people would be having sex. Afterwards, I told Brian I played mandolin, banjo, flute and harmonica, and the next night I was on-stage at Columbia University with them. They had that free jazz, wild energy about them.

GG: I had no familiarity with jazz and improvisation until I met Brian and Victor. Victor would tell me to see someone like Art Blakey. Sun Ra became a huge influence on us, from the spirit of improv to staging a total show, marching in through the audience or leaving that way.

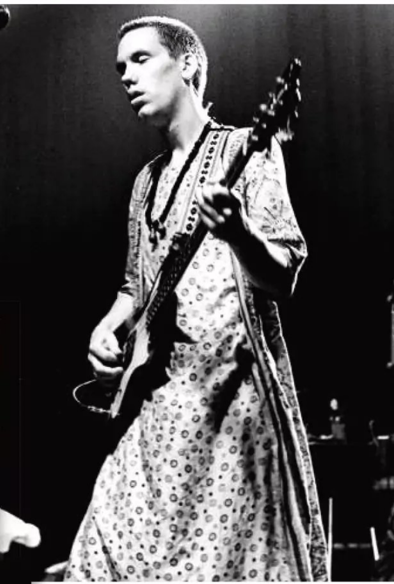
PB: The band asked if I'd jam with them on sax. After their road manager said he'd never tour with them again, I became road manager too. They each had very strong personalities, which clashed a lot. But the magic of their shows would overcome whatever was going on. And they'd play long sets too, 90 minutes or more.

Mark Van Hecke: Victor was an actor with Theatre X, an experimental theatre company that I wrote music for. He always asked me to hear his bands. The first three with Brian were bad! But I saw Violent Femmes, in a laundromat basement, and really enjoyed it. It was almost a performance piece, but with these nifty, quirky songs, not too far off Elvis Costello's approach.

I asked them if they wanted to record a demo in my back bedroom studio: they recorded Waiting For The Bus, Kiss Off and what became their signature song, Blister In The Sun. Travelling to LA and New York for work, I dropped off cassettes to labels, but no one responded. I said we should record an album, for posterity, [of] this ragtag band that played on street corners, quite confrontationally, blasting away on their acoustic instruments as people were buying their groceries, and hopefully teenagers for generations would get off on these songs.

VDL: We borrowed $10,000 from my father and made the album at the old Playboy club that had become a studio [in July 1982]. Each new session, another piece of gear was missing. We later found out that the studio was going bust, hence the gear being sold, and the engineer was in fact

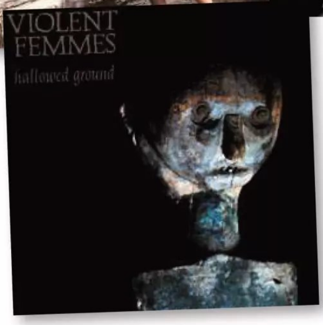
Paul Natkin/Getty, Getty, David Carol/Retna/Avalon/Avalon (2), Avalon (2), Courtesy John Kruth



“BRIAN TOLD ME, ‘GORDON WROTE HIS BEST SONGS WHEN HE WAS A VIRGIN!’”

John Kruth

violent femmes



the janitor. He’s got to be the only janitor with a platinum record to his credit.

GG: The album reached Alan Betrock at New York Rocker [magazine], who managed to get us two gigs. One was opening for Richard Hell & The Voidoids at The Bottom Line. The New York Times ran a review and that led to Slash signing us. They were the only label to say we didn’t need to re-record anything, or pick certain songs.

I have to give Brian credit, because he said, “We have all these different songs, let’s not go all over the place, let’s keep it more of a rock album.” In any case, Brian especially was down on my gospel songs, and didn’t want to record them.

JK: Nobody was paying attention to lyrics at that time, but Gordon’s just stood out. I mean, “Why can’t I get just one fuck?” “What do I have to do, to prove my love to you?” This little pipsqueak, giving it everything he had, driven further by this maniac rhythm section. Brian told me, “Gordon wrote his best songs when he was a virgin!”

PB: Eventually, the girls brought their boyfriends to the shows, and the audiences just kept growing. College radio played the living hell out of the album [released April 1983], and Slash worked their asses off to promote it.

Geoff Travis: Slash licensed the album to Rough Trade for the UK. It was an amazing, original record, using the punk template of freedom and adventurousness but turned on its head, similar to the way The Modern Lovers did. There was a skiffle-y sound, but not retro, like Blister In The Sun, an all-time classic with an all-time classic riff.

GG: Blister In The Sun was actually written for a woman I’d met at a poetry reading. She wanted to form a band like The Plasmatics, and maybe I’d play guitar, and I wanted a song I could offer. But the rehearsal got cancelled and I never heard from her again. I hear she joined a cult and moved to Canada.

JK: [June 1984’s second album] *Hallowed Ground* was a very different experience to the first album, more American roots music, like Country Death Song and It’s Gonna Rain, which was gospel. The first album blew the door open energy-wise, but *Hallowed Ground* showed Gordon really developing.

BR: *Hallowed Ground* was one of the first albums in what we now call Americana. But we weren’t coming from a revivalist standpoint. We didn’t sound like Muddy Waters.

VDL: Gordon’s religious side came to the fore then. Coming from a theatrical background, I was used to controversial material, but Brian was a bona fide atheist.

MVH: The band were in trouble. Gordon was being stand-offish, and just wanted to be with his girlfriend. Brian, who was a difficult personality, was demeaning to the others. He said to Gordon, “How can you be doing all these sex-type songs and yet you’re totally religious? I don’t get it!”

GG: Brian changed his mind about the gospel stuff because it appealed from a punk-contrarian perspective – to play a Sunday-school song in a punk club. Some people who loved the first album didn’t love *Hallowed Ground* because they didn’t like country, jazz, gospel and Christian lyrics.

GT: I remember being disturbed by some of Gordon’s lyrics, the brute aggressiveness of the sentiments. But I also accepted that it was the point of them.

JK: A song like Black Girls pushed buttons for people, but Gordon liked black girls and they liked him – he ended up marrying one. Gordon always addressed taboos; that was part of what was great about his writing, and you had to think about who you were.

GG: It never occurred to me that Country Death Song [man kills his family before hanging himself] was risky. It’s like a traditional ballad, a form that goes back hundreds of years. Black Girls got negative feedback too, but the lyrics are so stupid and crazy that it works. We’d have quit playing Black Girls live, but it lets us stretch out and improvise, and audiences love it.

VDL: When we started making money, we began touring as an electric and acoustic unit. I liked change; I didn’t want to be known for just one thing… [but] we all had completely compartmentalised conceptions about what the music should be. Gordon wanted to concentrate more on country and Brian was getting fed up with limited chord structures. But selfishness was coming to a head. I left in 1993.

PB: Some say Victor was let go. You can always find a better musician, but Victor’s playing had helped get them where they did. Violent Femmes weren’t about being professional like that, but as they played bigger places, their fans replaced those who were drawn to the chaos of the early days.

GG: For a long time, there was a lot of negativity, to the point of being sued [by Ritchie in 2007, when Gano licensed Blister In The Sun to Wendy’s Hamburgers]. It doesn’t feel like that any more, though it took 40 years! Brian and I are still together. Violent Femmes might not be the same band as when we started, but we’re still doing something special.

BR: I’m proud of the way Violent Femmes staked out our own turf, and that nobody to this day sounds similar to us, or that anyone influenced by us has surpassed us. Not many bands who’ve been around for 40 years can say that.

Violent Femmes best-of Add It Up (1981–1993) is reissued by Craft Recordings.

# of ice and fire

pin-up, muse, lover, junkie, goddess – the legend of **nico** has been defined by those who would deny her creative agency. in this extract from her new book, **jennifer otter bickerdike** reveals nico the artist, born of a bitter split from the velvet underground and a fateful fling with the doors' jim morrison, and forged in the crucible of her extraordinary second album, *the marble index*.

portrait by **guy webster**.

CHRISTA PÄFFGEN'S LIFE WAS EXTRAORDINARY FROM THE START. BORN ON OCTOBER 16, 1938 in Cologne, Germany, she spent time in a brutal orphanage. After the war, which claimed the life of her father, Willi, she moved with her mother Grete to Berlin, where the daughter's unusual height and razor cheekbones gained her entry to the fashion world. Soon she was the star of striking covers of Elle and Vogue magazines, and photographer Herbert Tobias suggested a name change: Nico.

After a role in Federico Fellini's La Dolce Vita made her an icon at 22, and affairs with Alain Delon – resulting in the birth of a son, Ari, in August 1962 – and Bob Dylan, a pattern established: Nico, seemingly aloof, coldly beautiful, would be constantly chased, a prize to be won but not always cherished. Falling in with Andy Warhol's Factory set in New York, she was recruited to front The Velvet Underground. But as we join her in mid-1967, the alliance is crumbling and a Nico solo album – *Chelsea Girl* – in a baroque folk style with songs by various Velvets, Dylan and her sometime accompanist, Jackson Browne – is in the can. Meanwhile, Warhol's most celebrated art movie yet, Chelsea Girls, also features Nico – the jewel in his crown of so-called 'Superstars'.

But Nico is chafing at the pigeonholes that her mentors are constructing, and struggling to find ways to support her ailing mother, sequestered in Ibiza, while Ari's future – bohemian globetrotting with Nico, or settled in Paris with Delon's mother Edith Boulogne – is in dispute. And Nico is about to meet someone who will turn everything upside-down… ➢

Child of the moon: Nico during the cover shoot for *The Marble Index*, Los Angeles, 1968.

Guy Webster/RPM Archives

ELLE
woman's own
TRENDSETTERS, BUDGET BUYS, CLASSICS
50 AUTUMN OUTFITS SPECIAL PREVIEW
8d
HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MAN

This year's model: Nico on a 1960 Paris fashion shoot; (right) on-set filming La Dolce Vita with director Federico Fellini (left) and co-star Marcello Mastroianni; (insets, below) the Elle and Woman's Own cover star; Factory products: Andy Warhol's Fuck; Nico sings with The Velvet Undergound; Chelsea Girls.

THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS OF THE circumstances that brought Nico and Jim Morrison together. Morrison had already seen the chanteuse perform with the Velvets at their May 1966 show at The Trip in Los Angeles, though they did not connect properly until the following year. Morrison's Doors bandmate, drummer John Densmore, thought that it was in March 1967 when the duo first met. The band was in New York and could not help but notice the 20-foot-high Nico posters pasted up all over Manhattan.

"We were staying at the dumpy Great Northern Hotel on 57th Street," recalled Densmore. "Convenient location, but the place smelled of old people. I was rooming right next to Jim, which turned out to be better than TV. Jim brought Nico back to his hotel room, and I'd never heard such crashing around. It sounded as if they were beating the shit out of each other. I was worried but never dared to ask what happened. Nico looked OK the next day, so I let it slide."

The more well-known account of how the two icons first met places the timeline as June or July 1967. After the Monterey Pop Festival, Nico decided to go back to the Castle, the gothic musicians' haunt in Los Feliz that had harboured the Velvets, Dylan and others. It was here that Danny Fields – working for The Doors' label Elektra and Nico's friend since 1963 – decided to play cupid. "I had a little electric light bulb in my head. I said, 'Say, Jim, I'm staying with Edie Sedgwick and Nico, up in the hills.' I thought I would bring him up there, and then he would fall in love with Nico."

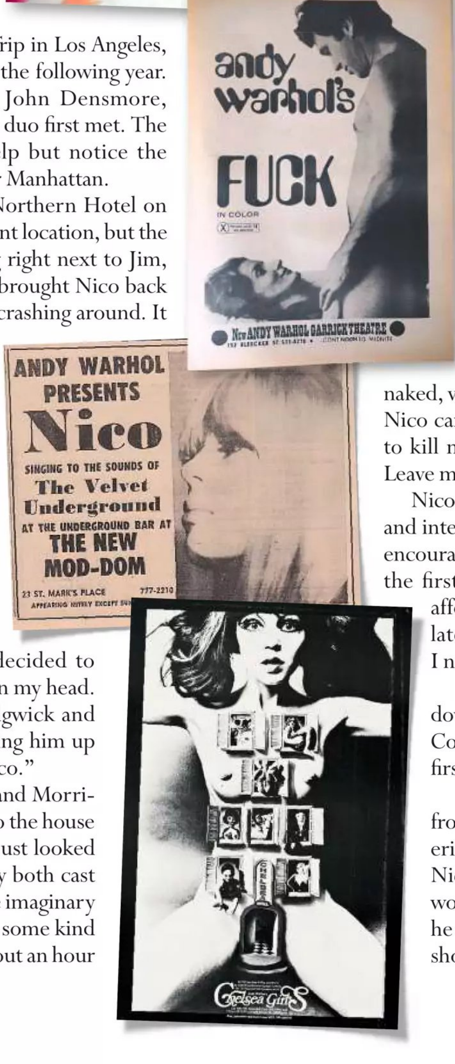
Fields recalled what happened when he and Morrison arrived at the Castle: "We finally got up to the house and Nico was standing in the doorway. He just looked at her, and she looked at him, and then they both cast their glances downward. They stared at some imaginary spot on the floor in between them. This was some kind of thing they were acting out. I came back about an hour later; they were still in the exact same positions, they hadn't moved… they hadn't said anything. This was their way of acknowledging, 'You're a beautiful, special person,' I suppose."

After an evening of heavy drug consumption by Morrison, Nico, Sedgwick and himself, Fields eventually fell asleep, only to be awoken by the sound of Nico sobbing. Rushing to his window, he saw "Jim and Nico standing there under the full moon in the courtyard. Jim was pulling Nico's hair and she was screaming. He never said anything. He just kept pulling her hair. Suddenly he ran into the house and left Nico weeping in her deep voice. Next thing I know, Morrison is completely naked, walking along the edge of the crenelated roof. Nico came flying into my room crying, 'He's going to kill me!' I said, 'He's not going to kill anyone. Leave me alone, I'm trying to sleep.'"

Nico's affair with Morrison would prove volatile and intense. But unlike her former beaus, Morrison encouraged Nico to write her own music. "He was the first man I was in love with, because he was affectionate to my looks and my mind," Nico later remarked. "He told me to write songs. I never thought that I could."

Morrison suggested that Nico begin writing down her dreams and to read Céline, Blake and Coleridge. Not long after, she composed her first song, Lawns Of Dawns.

At other times, the pair would drive, alone, from Los Angeles into the outlying desert, gathering peyote. "We had visions in the desert," Nico remembered. "It is like William Blake; he would see visions like Blake did, angels in trees, he would see these, and so would I. And Jim showed me that this is what a poet does."



Getty (4), Bridgeman Images, Alamy

"he was the first man i was in love with. he told me to write songs. i never thought that i could." nico on jim morrison

All tomorrow's parties: with The Velvet Underground (from left) Nico, Sterling Morrison, Maureen Tucker, Lou Reed, John Cale, Los Angeles, 1966; (above right, clockwise) Jim Morrison, 1968; Nico performs her debut single I'm Not Sayin' on Ready Steady Go!, 1965; at Monterey Pop with Brian Jones, 1967.

MORRISON HAD ALSO PERSUADED NICO THAT SHE could play an instrument; she just needed to find one that suited her. Following his advice, she bought a harmonium in San Francisco while on a promo jaunt for Chelsea Girls, and took it back to Manhattan with her. "She would practise it for hours, simple things, chords – really annoying stuff," recalled flatmate and fellow Factory 'Superstar' Viva. "She was very serious about it, dreadfully serious, like a Nazi organist. She'd pull the curtains across and light candles around her and do this funereal singing all day long. It was like I was living in a funeral parlour."

By October, Nico felt ready to make a public appearance as a solo artist. Seven nights were booked for her at New York club The Scene, a venue she had graced before with the Velvets. *Chelsea Girl* was about to come out, and The Village Voice featured ads for the gigs and the new album. A picture of a blonde, glum Nico accompanied the album ad, with the text, "The moon goddess Nico will conduct services nightly at Steve Paul's The Scene leading you in all your splendour with her liturgical chants." The opening act was Californian folk rock band Kaleidoscope. Attendees included the Warhol crowd and The Mothers Of Invention.

"There was only an organ on-stage, and she sat down at it and there was one spotlight on her," Danny Fields recalled. "It was like a child discovering a musical instrument for the first time. She would just press one note and bend her ear toward the keyboard and listen to it, and press it again and again, and then another note, and she'd listen to that. She did this for half an hour, then she tried a few combinations of notes and got into that."

Yet the moon goddess's noodling around was not appreciated by a majority of the crowd, as "people were starting to file out quietly, except for about 12 of us who were just mesmerised, transfixed by the whole performance. She finally performed two chants and it was over. It was one of the most beautiful things I'd ever seen."

Kaleidoscope's Chris Darrow remembered it differently. "Nico's delivery of her material was very flat, deadpan, and expressionless, and she played as though all of her songs were dirges," he related in Jonathan Eisen's essay collection, The Age Of Rock 2. "However, what happened next is what sticks in my mind the most. In between sets, Frank Zappa got up from his seat and walked up on the stage and sat behind Nico's organ. He proceeded to place his hands indiscriminately on the keyboard in an atonal fashion and screamed at the top of his lungs, doing a caricature of Nico's set. The words to his impromptu song were the names of vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, asparagus… This 'song' kept going for about a minute or so and then suddenly stopped. He walked off the stage and the show moved on. It was one of the greatest pieces of rock'n'roll theatre I have ever seen!"

WHEN *CHELSEA GIRL* CAME OUT IN OCTOBER 1967, it was a commercial flop, more so than *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, though Nico said in later interviews it was the only one of her solo LPs to earn any income. "I like the [cover] picture, even if it looks sad," she told journalist Kurt Lassen in November '67. "Sometimes I'm sad and mostly I like sad songs… when I sing I try to imagine I'm all alone, there's nobody out there listening. I play with the notes, with the feeling. People tell me that the album is good and that it is selling well. I honestly don't think it is the best I can do. That's why I'm working on another one, a better one."

Promotional efforts once again focused mainly on her looks. In a radio advertisement, sent by MGM/Verve to FM stations (and later included on a promo-only edition of the record), a voice booms, "Nico is beautiful, and in a world where so much can be so easily possessed on a whim, over a promise, she's unpossessable."

Nico rounded out 1967 with a cameo in another Warhol project, titled 'the 24-hour-movie', then 'FUCK', before becoming ****, or Four Star for simplicity. Its premiere on December 15 and 16 was a 25-hour marathon showcasing all 30 sections of the film, with the longest part – The Imitation Of Christ, starring Nico – clocking in at an eye-watering eight hours. One portion featured shots of the docks and streets of Sausalito, California. As flickering images play across the screen, Nico provides a dreamy, whimsical narration:

"A man is walking on the sea.
The sea is walking.
The sea is after me.
The night grows into the sky.
The light grows back into the earth."

But Nico had already had enough of Warhol's movies. In a 1979 interview with Kristine McKenna, she said, "I've never much ➢

cared for them because I've always been in opposition to his ideas... The way he'd always come around and want to film me, whether I felt like it or not – he was a rapist."

The last event of 1967 to include The Velvet Underground and Nico working in some capacity together came before the end of the year, with the launch party of The Velvet Underground Untitled or Index on December 14 at 457 Madison Avenue in New York. The project consisted of an oversized book, packed with irreverent and unexpected formatting, that perfectly showcases Warhol's multimedia aesthetic. Part of the package is an 'unrecorded song' – almost five minutes of conversation taped at the Factory between Nico, Lou Reed and others while they look at copies of Index as *The Velvet Underground & Nico* plays in the background.

Nico is heard randomly singing the chorus of The Beatles' Good Morning, Good Morning. She sounds zoned out, not completely present. It was one of her few documented appearances that December. Though *Chelsea Girl* had been out for only a short time, she was visibly absent during the promotional rounds. An article from the December 2 issue of Cashbox magazine declared, "Elektra's Danny Fields is in something of a quandary at the moment as he's been trying to get in touch with Nico and meeting with no success," adding, "Danny says that she's not at her old castle any longer. Danny's problem is that he's running out of castles."

Nico's spaced-out audio on Index, combined with her apparent disappearance, were symptoms of an increasing problem: her dependency on heroin.

NICO WAS NO STRANGER TO DRUGS before joining The Velvet Underground. As a model, she had often used diet pills to curb her appetite and help maintain a svelte figure. "She used to say how there used to be lots of speed, lots of amphetamine to keep [the models] thin; they were always handing that out," says her biographer and '80s musical collaborator James Young. But the double standard applied to male and female drug users cannot be overstated. For many male addicts, substance abuse is part of the artistic package and can even lend a level of credibility. The label of 'junkie' sticks to women, whereas it often seems to bounce off men.

Still, Nico's fall from recreational user into addiction was a "quick turn", says her longtime friend Clive Crocker. "I tried to dissuade her, but she was into heroin... I know who put her onto it... but I can't tell you that name because he's still alive."

Nico's son Ari – then five years old – thinks there is a correlation between him going to live permanently with the Delon family and his mother's dependency. "She started to take more drugs because of this adoption thing," he says. "That made her very sad. 'Child's thief' – that's how she called my grandmother. It's like her soul had been stabbed."

Heroin may have offered Nico a way out of the expectations of others as well as relief from yet another persona she had created in her attempts to overhaul her image. Her switch of musical styles, from folky *Chelsea Girl* to creator of her own music, came with an equally dramatic shift in appearance. Gone were the eyebrow-skimming bangs and the multiple pairs of fake eyelashes adorning heavily lined lids. Her blonde mane was replaced by red locks that progressed to flowing brown hair. Floaty black – always black – capes and robes in weighty fabrics replaced tailored white suits. "She was terrifying in her austere beauty," said Danny Fields, "which she didn't want. She really was girlish, in a nice way. She just liked to laugh."

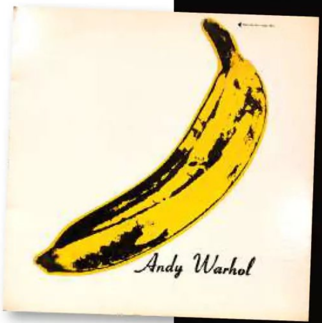
Now living with Warhol's new business manager, Fred Hughes, in an apartment on East 16th Street, Nico took long, candle-lit baths and practised the harmonium. It was the first time she'd felt the music was hers and that she could use her own experiences, ideas and feelings for inspiration. When asked where the lyrical content came from, she said, "It has to do with my going to Berlin in 1946 when I was a little girl and seeing the entire city destroyed. I like the fallen empire, the image of the fallen empire."

Having crafted the songs for the new album, Nico now needed a record label that would put them out. She turned to Fields for help. "She was so afraid," he said. "She knew that she had this great beauty and this great mystery, but she was so worried – '*But I want them to know my songs.*'"

Fields was perfectly placed to bolster Nico's career. At Elektra, he had access to label president, Jac Holzman. "Danny was close to the whole Warhol crowd," said Holzman. "One day, he brought Nico in. I knew who Nico was, and she brought in her little harmo-

winter songs

nico's '60s albums, by danny eccleston.



The Velvet Underground & Nico

★★★★★

The Velvet Underground & Nico

(Verve, 1967)

While the Velvets would quickly resent Andy Warhol for foisting Nico on them, it's impossible to imagine the band's epochal debut without the extra chill, shadow and unAmerican otherness she brought to it. And beyond all its other qualities, All Tomorrow's Parties' meld of baroque and drones would provide a path for all Nico's best subsequent work.

NICO: CHELSEA GIRL

Nico

★★★

Chelsea Girl

(Verve, 1967)

She would disown the arrangements (especially the flutes) but there's not a lot wrong with her solo debut: good songs (especially Jackson Browne's These Days, debuting here, and Dylan's I'll Keep It With Mine); tasteful orchestrations; plus Nico's inimitable graveyard tones, at their lugubrious best on Tim Hardin's Eulogy To Lenny Bruce.

nico
the marble index

Nico

★★★★

The Marble Index

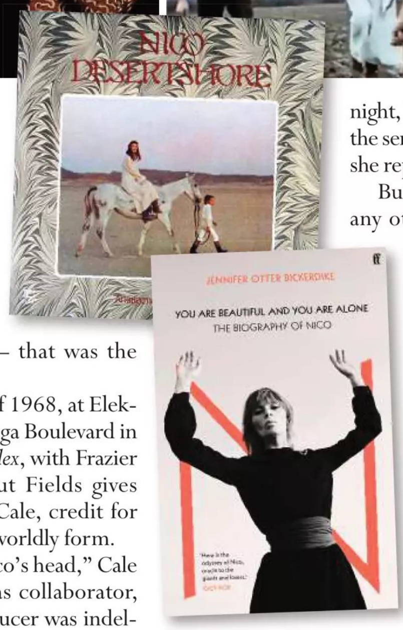
(Elektra, 1968)

Nico's voice comes into its own on her best solo LP – especially commanding on the spooky Frozen Warnings – while John Cale provides horror-folk backing. Mark Lanegan puts it best in an e-mail to MOJO: "It has more in common with Sylvia Plath than any rock music. It pre-dates the goth music it inspired by over a decade and exists in a space all its own. Truly timeless."

Guy Webster/RPM Archives, ©Christain Rose/Dalle/Iconicpix, Getty

Harmonium mundi: Nico at Le Bataclan, Paris, 1971; (left) in 1967; (right, above) with John Cale at CBGB, New York, 1979; (below) with Stooges roadie John Adams (left) and Iggy Pop in a promo film for *The Marble Index*, 1968.

> “on those solo albums she was really in pain. it’s that whole thing of self-loathing and the discovery of her personality.” john cale


NICO
DESERTSHORE
JENNIFER OTTER BICKERDIKE
YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU ARE ALONE
THE BIOGRAPHY OF NICO

nium; she sat, and she played. Was it off the wall? Unbelievably so. But so what?”

“Jac has wonderful taste,” Fields would remember, “and I kinda knew that he would see through the legend, the myth, the beauty, the goddess. I don’t think he wanted to fuck her. Jac simply recognised good songs – that was the essence of Elektra.”

It took three sessions in May of 1968, at Elektra Studios at 962 North La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles, to cut *The Marble Index*, with Frazier Mohawk listed as producer. But Fields gives Nico’s former bandmate, John Cale, credit for shaping the album into its other-worldly form.

“The songs were already in Nico’s head,” Cale said later. Yet his contribution as collaborator, arranger and uncredited co-producer was indelible. “Before I did *Index* I didn’t know I could arrange,” he said, “but then I got lucky and found a very strong personality like Nico who threw me against the wall and I had to come and bounce back.”

The process wasn’t easy because, says Cale, the two would fight at “every opportunity”. Each song was a separate challenge: the harmonium was not an instrument ever truly in tune. Cale added a variety of elements to the mix, including glockenspiel, bells, mouth organ and bosun’s pipe, electric viola, piano, bass and guitar.

With recording over, Cale kicked the singer out of the studio, locking the door behind her. Two days later, he let Nico back in to hear the final results. “You’ve got to remember that on those solo albums she was really in pain,” he reflected. “Afterwards she’d burst into tears of gratitude. It’s that whole thing of self-loathing and the discovery of her personality.” The final album clocked in at just 30 minutes. Producer Mohawk later said the LP’s length was intentional, as “that’s all I could listen to. After it was finished, we genuinely thought people might kill themselves. *The Marble Index* isn’t a record you listen to. It’s a hole you fall into.”

ON JUNE 3, 1968, VALERIE SOLANAS SHOT ANDY Warhol. Factory insider David Croland remembers getting the news of the attack. “I was with Nico and Susan [Bottomly, AKA International Velvet] at my apartment on 71st Street. The phone rang, and it was Viva Superstar. She said that Andy had been shot. We were all a little freaked out. I said to Susan and Nico, ‘We’re going to the hospital to see Andy. We don’t know if he’s going to live or die.’ Nico did not want to. She said, ‘No, we’re not. We’re going to stay here because they’re shooting Superstars possibly.’ We just stayed in my apartment with the lights off and the candles burning, until we heard from Viva that Andy was alive and would possibly pull through.”

Terribly shaken by Warhol’s brush with death, Nico wrote a new song for him called The Falconer. She did not think the people around him had taken the shooting seriously.

Physically, if not mentally, recovered, Warhol and Elektra Records held the premiere of *The Marble Index* at the Factory on September 19. The evening promised a “playing of the album” to start “promptly at 8.40pm”, with “wine, supper and dancing to follow”. On the night, Nico told a reporter that the album was “like a movie. It has all the senses and it is in my line.” Asked if she thought it would succeed, she replied, “Of course. There’s very little good music around.”

But on its release *The Marble Index* proved to be so different to any other album of the time that even critics seemed confused about how to classify or describe it. “I can’t make out a single real word,” said NME’s reviewer. Danny Fields tried hard to help Nico in any way he could, though she did not have formal management or a booking agent to organise concerts. In his memoir, Follow The Music, Jac Holzman recalled, “She’d call up and, in her low moan, tell you, ‘I’ll be in on Tuesday, set up some interviews.’ Tuesday would come, and no Nico. Eight months later, she’d call again. ‘I’m back in town.’ You would say, ‘What about those other times?’ ‘Oh, I couldn’t do those, I had to go to Rome.’”

Even if Nico had been enthused and dependable during the album’s promotional cycle, in all likelihood it would still have experienced low sales figures. “It’s an artefact, not a commercial commodity,” explained John Cale in a 1977 interview with Sounds. “You can’t sell suicide.”

YET *THE MARBLE INDEX* ENDURED – ITS CULT KEPT alive by a small coterie of fans: Joe Boyd, who would bring Nico to Reprise for her third album, *Desertshore*; Marc Almond, who would feature Nico on his fourth solo album, *The Stars We Are*. Out of it, John Cale got the job of producing the debut by a new Elektra act, The Stooges. While the latter were in New York, Nico and Iggy Pop – a fan of the Velvets and *The Marble Index* – were introduced and the two began an affair. “My earliest memory of her is sitting there with John Cale in the booth,” Pop tells me. “She would sit there going, ‘Yaah, yaah, this is good… better than the Velvets.’”

Pop admired Nico’s strength and her sophistication: “She was like hanging out with a rock singer, like hanging out with a guy,” he told me, “except she had girl’s parts. It was the only difference. Otherwise, it was like a guy. A tough-minded, egotistical, artistic kind of guy.” However, it is Nico’s artistry that has stuck with Pop.

“She was a great, great artist,” he says. “It was just a real kick to be around her. I’m absolutely convinced that some day, when people have ears to hear her, in the same way that people have eyes to see a Van Gogh now, that people are gonna just go, ‘WHOOOAAA!’”

Taken from You Are Beautiful And You Are Alone: The Biography Of Nico by Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, published by Faber on July 15, 2021.

Sweet Inspiration

Songs from the South. Some others from East Woodhay, Hampshire. A sleeve that shocked in 1971. A smash hit single that shocks more today. Fifty years since the release of *Sticky Fingers*, MOJO's writers and friends – plus Marianne, and Bill – unzip **The Rolling Stones**' most iconic album and ask: Does it still taste so good?

Photograph: **Peter Webb**

©Peter Webb 1969

THE MYTHOLOGY IS SEDUCTIVE. TUNES CUT ON THE LAM – THE Rolling Stones "oiled up and running hot", said guitarist Keith Richards later – in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. One of them tested live, less than a week later, at the Altamont Speedway show where the death knell of the '60s rang. You couldn't make it up.

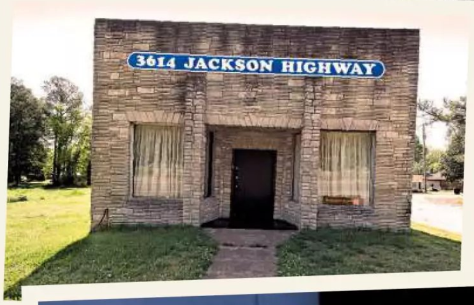
But this was December 1969, and only three songs – Brown Sugar, Wild Horses, You Gotta Move – came out of that storied session. Before it would finally emerge in April 1971, *Sticky Fingers*' creation story would get far messier.

That the Stones survived 1970 at all is remarkable enough. The extraction from manager Allen Klein came with a monster bill for deferred tax. Negotiations to establish their own record label under the umbrella of Ahmet Ertegun's Atlantic were necessarily discreet and sporadic. Richards and his girlfriend Anita Pallenberg – parents to Marlon since August 1969 – were getting deeper into heroin. Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull, their relationship crumbling, began the year in court, Jagger fined for possession of cannabis. He would end the year a father for the first time, of Karis, by American actor-singer Marsha Hunt. In between, three films featuring Jagger would premiere: the execrable Ned Kelly, the pilloried Performance, and depressing Gimme Shelter, the Maysles brothers' fly-on-the-wall documentary of the Stones' '69 US tour, including Altamont's scenes from hell.

Finishing up their contract with Decca/London, the Stones delivered a live album, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, and a single – Cocksucker Blues – they knew the label could not release. Meanwhile, under the radar, the new Rolling Stones Mobile Recording Studio rolled up to Jagger's as-yet unrenovated Stargroves pile near East Woodhay, Hampshire, and the balance of a new album took shape. Producer Jimmy Miller and engineers Glyn and Andy Johns, plus house guests including Kenneth Anger and a new Jagger love interest, ➢

They got the blues: The Rolling Stones (from left) Charlie Watts,Keith Richards, Bill Wyman, Mick Taylor and Mick Jagger in photographer Peter Webb's studio, 1 Park Village East, London, summer 1969.

The Rolling Stones
Sticky Fingers



< Bianca Pérez-Mora Macías, made the best of the hastily jerry-built bedrooms.

It is testament to Jagger's ability to glean some shape out of chaos that *Sticky Fingers* coheres and expresses a character all its own, one influenced for the first time by incumbent lead guitarist Mick Taylor – who looked, and played, like an angel. As the testaments that follow underline, the songs all dazzle in their own way, whether born in the Deep South or Home Counties (or, in the case of Sister Morphine, in London and LA in 1968). The packaging – Andy Warhol's zip-crotch cover; John Pasche's lips logo, debuting here – defined and renewed the Stones as the sexiest band in pop.

In March '71, the Stones embarked on their "Farewell To England" tour, as it was announced they would be emigrating to France. In April, they signed formally with Atlantic parent Kinney Services for an unheard-of royalty of a dollar per album sold, and Brown Sugar – shelved for 16 months – peaked at Number 1 in the US, Number 2 in the UK. And on May 12, Mick married Bianca.

As with so many Stones gambits before and since, *Sticky Fingers* seemed to say, 'Crisis? What crisis?'

"While the rest of the band are in the swamp, Mick Taylor is up in the heavens."

Bobby Gillespie

Alamy (2), © Alec Byrne-www.rpmarchives.com(2), John Minihan/Getty Images, Getty, Sam Christmas, Jason Thrasher

1 Brown Sugar

***Sticky Fingers'* hottest rock is also a hot potato, writes Alison Fensterstock.**

How do you untie a knot like Brown Sugar – for 50 years one of the Stones' hottest rocks, even while its lyrical content and tone rightly had even Mick squicked out as long ago as a 1995 Rolling Stone interview, in which he said, "I never would write that song now"? In her 2020 book Black Diamond Queens, the Black American scholar Maureen Mahon uses the song to investigate just what white British rockers were so erect about, when it came to Black American women's sexuality – and as well, as an entry point to tell the stories of three such women on the rock scene who crossed paths with Mick Jagger, but also hewed meaningful, if undersung ones of their own.

The tune is Rosetta Stones: a tough, driving hot slab of the blues that inspired the band, captured at the moment it also becomes hard rock as they defined it, arrogant enough to know it would make an arena jump and shout. Some might think their satanic majesties' live debut of the tune at Altamont may have cursed it with the legacy of that murderous night. But American rock and blues already lived under a pall of foundational violence, from the Gold Coast slave ship to the market down in New Orleans to the minstrel tent show, an institution recent enough to have employed Little Richard. The band's most problematic song also, somehow, comes across as their most fluent piece of Americana.

So, we've got a racialised colonialist rape fantasy, recorded in Muscle Shoals, Alabama – quite near the beating heart of the country's original sin, placing an imagined Black female body as a stand-in for the American music the Stones loved and yearned to penetrate and own. It's nasty stuff, still frequently in the live set, with lyrics edited per Mick's whim. Does it still taste so good?

Rolling respect: Bobby Gillespie (left) and Patterson Hood.

2 Sway

Get in the swamp for some existential rock'n'roll. Your guide: Bobby Gillespie.

Sway is like nothing else in the Stones' *oeuvre*, and it's unlike anything else in rock'n'roll.

I love Mick's lyric: "Did you ever wake up to find/A day that broke up your mind/Destroyed your notion of circular time." Sometimes, Mick's lyrics are kind of gestural. There's an ironic distance. But on Sway you get this real sense of existential dread, like you get with Rocks Off on *Exile On Main St.*: "I only get my rocks off when I'm dreamin'." I mean, man, what an awful place to be.

The groove is amazing. It says

You got to move: Jagger, Taylor, Richards return to The Marquee, London, 1971; (inset left) Keith with Anita Pallenberg and new son Marlon, August 1969; (opposite page, clockwise from far left) *Sticky Fingers*' Warhol sleeve; mayhem and murder at Altamont, December 6, 1969; Jagger's Stargroves pile; Richards and Jim Dickinson listen to a Wild Horses playback at Muscle Shoals Sound; MSS studio exterior.

you're in the mire. It doesn't have the propulsion of a Brown Sugar or Bitch or Jumpin' Jack Flash. It's almost Can-like in its inertia. It's like a swamp of sound – it's moving but you're going nowhere, and it really fits the existentially stranded narrator.

And while the rest of the band are in the swamp, Mick Taylor is up in the heavens. He adds colours to the music, like Brian Jones did with his marimbas and recorders and harpsichords, but just with guitar. You get two Mick Taylor solos – one with slide in the middle and one without at the end, and he brings a tenderness, a plaintiveness that I think encouraged Jagger to write gentler songs.

The Stones were essentially a dance band. They knew rock'n'roll had to be fun. But they took that fun and joy and sexuality and still managed to put in lyrics – like Sway, or Rocks Off – of existential dread. I mean, that's fucking difficult. Dylan tried it for a while, and then he gave up. It was too hard!

3 Wild Horses

Drive-By Truckers' Patterson Hood was five when the Stones rocked up to his dad's workplace, and cut their most heartfelt song.

No band has ever released four albums in a row more essential and perfect than The Rolling Stones from *Beggars Banquet* through *Exile On Main St.*, but song for song, *Sticky Fingers* is my vote for their greatest of all time. And my very favourite song on the album, and a song that has had such an impact on my life personally and musically is Wild Horses. Plus it was recorded in my hometown, in the studio my father, bass player David Hood, co-owned.

It's a great song and a great story: how the Stones on their November '69 tour said they wanted to record in the South; how Memphis-based writer Stanley Booth sounded out his friend, session keyboardist Jim Dickinson. Jim reached out to Stax but there were two problems. First, Stax owner Jim Stewart was on the outs with Atlantic Records, who were in the process of signing the Stones. Second, the Stones were travelling with a visa that enabled them to perform live but not to record, and Memphis being a heavy union town, that was quite the obstacle.

The solution was Muscle Shoals, three hours to the southeast of Memphis, and already the home of Rick Hall's Fame studio, the launch pad for instant soul classics including When A Man Loves A Woman by Percy Sledge, I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You) by Aretha Franklin and Tell Mama by Etta James (my dad played bass on that one). But Hall, too, was feuding with Atlantic, so Dickinson turned to the five-month-old Muscle Shoals Sound, a tiny former casket factory at 3614 N Jackson Highway – technically, in Sheffield.

Legends abound about whether Gram Parsons actually co-wrote Wild Horses or just influenced it. Clearly, Gram's version came out first, on *Burrito Deluxe*, a whole year before *Sticky Fingers* (and where it is credited to Jagger-Richards). But for sure Mick and Keith finished writing it in the tiny bathroom of Muscle Shoals Sound and recorded it that same night. Also for certain, it is beautiful, one of the fullest expressions of regretful longing in popular music, whether the sentiments were originally addressed to Keith's son Marlon, or Gram's sister Avis – another theory. And whether or not "Wild horses couldn't drag me away" were Marianne Faithfull's first words when she came to in hospital after her suicide attempt in Sydney in July.

It also *sounds* wonderful – shonky and druggy and late-night. Part of that sound is Dickinson, playing piano in place of Stones keysman Ian Stewart, who baulked at the song's minor key ("I only play the boogie woogie," he told Jim, pronouncing it with soft 'g's). The studio had just had their piano professionally tuned, except the Stones always tuned to Keith, which in this case was about a quarter step off from standard, just enough to render the piano useless for the session. Never one to give up easily, Jim attempted to play along on the Hammond B3 and Wurlitzer electric, thinking that perhaps he could 'bend' the notes just enough to make it work, to no avail.

There was, however, a beat up old piano in the corner that no one used. It had tacks over the pads giving it a ragtime sound that had been used recently for a Boz Scaggs session. Sure enough, Jim was able to find just enough notes that were close enough to work and he proceeded to do what he called his "best Floyd Cramer impression". He played along with the take and the rest is history.

Wild Horses went on to be a US hit single in June '71 and a classic, influencing artists across the spectrum from country to rock'n'roll to Americana, and remains one of my favourite recordings of all time. Little Muscle Shoals Sound would birth many huge records – by The Staple Singers, Willie Nelson, Bobby Womack, Rod Stewart, Traffic and a ton of other artists. My dad played bass on all of those. ➢

Going the moonlight mile: the Stones say Farewell to England, Colston Hall, Bristol, March '71; (far left) Billy Preston; (left) mixing with Jimmy Miller (seated, left) and Glyn Johns; (below) Bobby Keys; variations on a sleeve.

4 Can't You Hear Me Knocking

The Stones as jam band? John Mulvey just says yes to some "poodling about".

For all the performative sloppiness, The Rolling Stones' career has been built more on calculation than improvisation. An unflappable rhythm section; an artillery of riffs; the pantomime signifiers of rock'n'roll abandon – these have sustained the Stones' greatness for so long, rather than spontaneous musical innovation. Can't You Hear Me Knocking, though (or at least its second half), allows us a rare glimpse of the Stones' freestyle potential. It is, as was the way of many things in 1971, a jam.

The Stones hardly seemed like natural allies of jam bands at the turn of the '70s. "The Grateful Dead is where everybody got it wrong," Keith Richards would reflect in 2015. "Just poodling about for hours and hours. Jerry Garcia, boring shit, man." Nevertheless, Can't You Hear Me Knocking betrays a certain knowledge, especially of Santana's Latin-tinged workouts. Santana had opened for the Stones at Altamont, a few months before the track was recorded at Olympic in spring 1970. The Grateful Dead, you'll recall, pulled out of Altamont after Marty Balin was knocked unconscious by a Hell's Angel during Jefferson Airplane's set.

Two and three-quarter minutes into Can't You Hear Me Knocking, following one of the most staccato attack strategies in Richards' portfolio, the track becomes all about where the music can go when the riff ends. Perhaps significantly, the jump is orchestrated by the other guys in the room: Bobby Keys soloing on sax; Billy Preston adding organ shade; Rocky Dijon and Jimmy Miller rewiring the beat. The key Stone here is Mick Taylor, his lines clean and serpentine in the left channel where Richards' contributions in the right have been choppy, ultra-distorted. In this mood one suspects Taylor could poodle about, beautifully, for hours and hours; indeed he showed up on-stage to do just that with the Grateful Dead in 1988. Jagger meanwhile, after initially contributing to the mood of incremental hysteria by pushing his vocals way high, is left twiddling his thumbs. "We've never really done anything else like it since," he noted in 2015. "I'm always slightly ambivalent about doing it [live], I guess because I don't do anything for the last five minutes."

> **"Bitch went from being this laconic mess into a real groove, and I thought, 'Wow, that's what Keith Richards does!'"**
>
> **Andy Johns**

5 You Gotta Move

The Stones raid an old bluesman's tune bank. For once, they paid the piper, reports David Fricke.

Fred McDowell was in his fifties, a farmer by trade and a bluesman on weekends, when he made his recording debut in 1959, taped at home in Como, Mississippi by the folklorist Alan Lomax. "This is early blues as dance music," Lomax wrote, "with the slide guitar going hell for leather." But it was McDowell's searing way with a spiritual – how the guitar became "another voice," Lomax said, in "clean, steely melodic figures" – that compelled The Rolling Stones to cover his treatment of You Gotta Move, a well-travelled hymn, at Muscle Shoals, just three hours' drive from Como.

Jagger and Richards played it almost every night on the Stones' '69 US tour, in an acoustic-duo sequence with Robert Wilkins' Prodigal Son from 1968's *Beggars Banquet* and Robert Johnson's Love In Vain, recently cut for *Let It Bleed*. "When I was into Chuck, Muddy and Bo, I wanted to know… who turned them on," Richards said in 2008 of the Stones' late-'60s obsession with Delta soul and mystery. In fact, despite the age difference, McDowell was a contemporary who had recently turned pro when he taped You Gotta Move for the Arhoolie label on July 5, 1965 – the same week the Stones hit Number 1 in America with (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction.

At Muscle Shoals, the Stones struggled to adapt McDowell's solitary call to Judgement Day as a group. But over nearly two dozen takes, gritty perfection was "created out of chaos," wrote eyewitness Stanley Booth. Richards swapped the National steel guitar he used on-stage for an acoustic 12-string; drummer Charlie Watts and guitarist Mick Taylor worked around the melody; and bassist Bill

Sticky Fingers
The Rolling Stones
Fowler's
West India
Treacle

Estate Of Keith Morris/Getty, Robert Altman/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty, Getty (2), © Alec Byrne-www.rpmarchives.com, Scott Tsai

"Can't You Hear Me Knocking Is Outstanding"

Stones bassist **Bill Wyman** loves *Sticky Fingers* so much he named a restaurant after it.

What do you remember of the Muscle Shoals sessions for Brown Sugar, Wild Horses and You Gotta Move?

I just checked in my diaries I wrote at the time, we were there for just three days between concerts and cut a great track each day.

You played Wurlitzer on You Gotta Move – was that common?

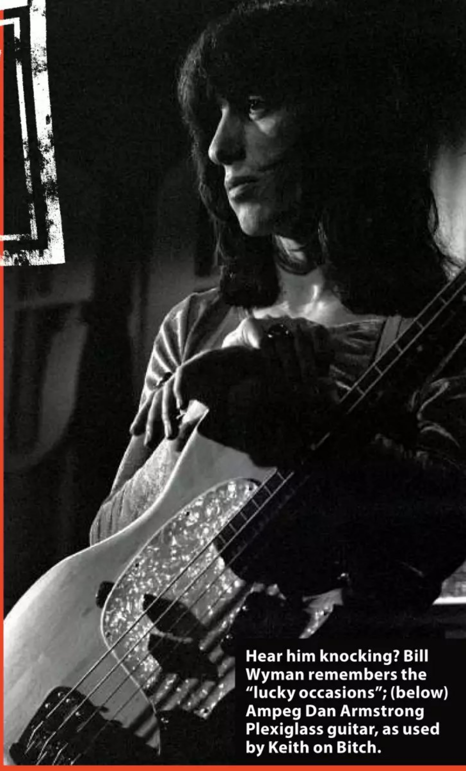
I would sometimes play other instruments, as I did with Brian [Jones] in the old days. That song didn't need a bass, and so I played electric piano.

***Sticky Fingers* is kind of a hotchpotch. Some of it's from Muscle Shoals; the bulk from various UK sessions between February and October '70; Sister Morphine from 1968. Why did it take so long to come together?**

On most albums we added tracks from earlier that hadn't been used at the time, as they weren't needed, or didn't fit, but were still good. Albums usually took a long while to come together, principally because we were always working so hard on a variety of things, from touring, doing press and media stuff, and of course personal things from individual members would also interfere with the recording schedules. And the mixing always took months.

It was the first Stones album to really showcase Mick Taylor. What did he bring to the Stones' feel and sound?

Mick Taylor was an outstanding player who added something completely fresh to the band's sound. His slide guitar work was brilliant and admired by all.



Hear him knocking? Bill Wyman remembers the "lucky occasions"; (below) Ampeg Dan Armstrong Plexiglass guitar, as used by Keith on Bitch.

What are your favourite recordings from that album and why?

Can't You Hear Me Knocking is outstanding, and after the basic song ended, the continuation by the band into almost a jam, is magic and only happens by chance on a few lucky occasions when the recording tape is left to run. A typical example of this is the 10-minute version of Going Home on *Aftermath*, where the same thing happened.

Some have called it the Stones' best album? Is it? And if not, what is?

Sticky Fingers is one in my Top 4 Stones' albums. The others being *Beggars Banquet*, *Let It Bleed* and *Exile On Main St*. All from the period from 1968 to 1972 when Jimmy Miller was our producer.

Wyman got behind an electric piano. During a playback, Richards told Booth, "The new album's underway."

McDowell died a year after *Sticky Fingers* came out, in July, 1972, aged 66. He lived long enough for Arhoolie's Chris Strachwitz to visit him in Como to deliver the biggest royalty cheque the singer had ever seen, thanks to the Stones. But, Strachwitz recalled, McDowell was "more delighted knowing that his music had made such an impact."

6 Bitch

Mick's *other* sex-equals-drugs banger. Andrew Perry marvels at a libidinous groove.

With mirror-image sequencing at side two's pole position, comparable themes of carnal addiction, and even selection as B-side to *Sticky Fingers*' world-beating megahit, Bitch can only ever stand in Brown Sugar's shadow. Where that song unfolds majestically according to a pop song's 'pocket symphony' narrative, however, this flipside version hits its target no less convincingly.

The opening 15 seconds are miraculous: Bill Wyman leads the charge, establishing a tough, tensile groove which drills ahead undeviatingly to 0:45, before breaking into an elevating bridge section, then snapping back onto the rails with a blast of declamatory horns. Woo-hoo!

Worked up from an initial Jagger sketch, Bitch is a textbook case of the Stones' two-man songwriterly push-and-pull. Circa October '70, probably at Stargroves, a jam conducted by Mick, Charlie Watts and saxman Bobby Keys was limping along inconclusively. Mick Taylor drifted in on rhythm guitar, but, according to engineer Andy Johns, it was when Keith Richards swanned in characteristically late that everything coalesced.

Richards sat on the floor, shoeless, to evening-breakfast on a bowl of cereal, but suddenly leapt up to grab his Dan Armstrong plexiglass guitar, accelerate the tempo substantially, and hone that thrusting rhythm to perfection. "It went from being this laconic mess into a real groove," Johns remembered, "and I thought, 'Wow, *that's* what he does!'"

It's Richards, reputedly, who solos with extravagant (curiously Taylor-esque) fluidity for 90-odd seconds towards the end, while Taylor himself chugs behind in support. The 2015 deluxe reissue unearthed a different, looser take that stretches out to nearly six priapic minutes, thundering on and on into the night.

7 I Got The Blues

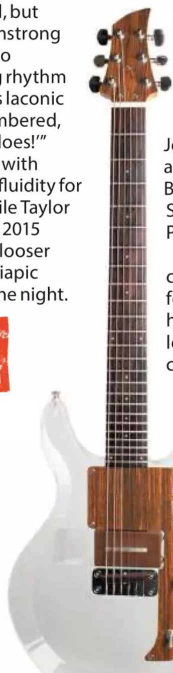
They also got the soul, argues Sylvie Simmons.

If *Sticky Fingers* is the Stones album sometimes overlooked by critics salivating over *Exile On Main St.*, I Got The Blues is the song that tends to get overlooked on *Sticky Fingers*. Lord knows why. Maybe some of the other slow songs or blues songs offer more of a story, while all I Got The Blues has is perfection.

There are times it evokes Love In Vain in its pace and mood. Both are laments for a woman who's gone – though where Robert Johnson's protagonist tries to get her back, Jagger's, pained as he is, is all about acceptance. With the tenderness displayed in Wild Horses and in stark contrast to the machismo of Bitch, he prays that she finds a better guy who "Won't drag you down with abuse."

Despite the title, this is not a straightahead blues. It's equal parts blues, gospel and soul; a bit Robert Johnson but a bigger bit Otis Redding, another of Mick and Keith's heroes: I've Been Loving You Too Long (which the Stones covered five years earlier) or Pain In My Heart slowed way, way down.

The slowness has a lot to do with its captivating beauty: a heroin tempo that feels on the verge of falling asleep – perhaps "in the silk sheet of time" – yet never loses its focus. And Jagger's vocal sounds clean and clear, as does Mick Taylor's guitar, hard-edged even through the reverb. The *pièces de resistance*, though, come from the "outsiders": Billy Preston's soaring gospel keyboards add a touch of the divine, while the Stax-style horn section bring an epic physicality to the heart-break and a stirring glory to the song. ➢



Going Mobile

On the road to legendary status, **The Rolling Stones Mobile** was key to *Sticky Fingers'* Stargroves cuts. **Tom Doyle** gets in the truck.

AS A STATE-of-the-art studio built in 1969 inside a 34-foot-long BMC lorry, The Rolling Stones Mobile was designed to save them money and liberate them creatively. Integral to *Sticky Fingers'* Stargroves cuts, it enabled recording at Nellcôte for *Exile On Main St.*, while – rented out to the Stones' peers – it taped landmark recordings by Led Zeppelin (*III* to *Physical Graffiti*) and The Who (*Who's Next*), and key concert albums including Bob Marley's *Live!* Meanwhile, it was lumpenly immortalised as "Rolling truck Stones thing" in the lyric of Deep Purple's Smoke On The Water from 1972's mobile-recorded *Machine Head*.

At first, the lorry's exterior was left in the original aluminium, until it annoyed the crew using it to soundtrack the filming of Frank Zappa's *200 Motels* when the lights kept reflecting off it. Subsequently it underwent a camouflage paint job that lent it a handy steer-clear vibe. "There was no way for people to know what it was," says Tapani Talo, the mobile's chief engineer between 1973-76. "It was just like an army truck and people don't go and mess with army trucks (*laughs*)."

Nonetheless, what appeared to be a military vehicle being driven by a squad of longhairs inevitably attracted police attention. Its crew were forever worried that the mobile's association with the outlaw Stones would one day see its sound insulation being ripped apart by determined law enforcers looking for hidden drugs.

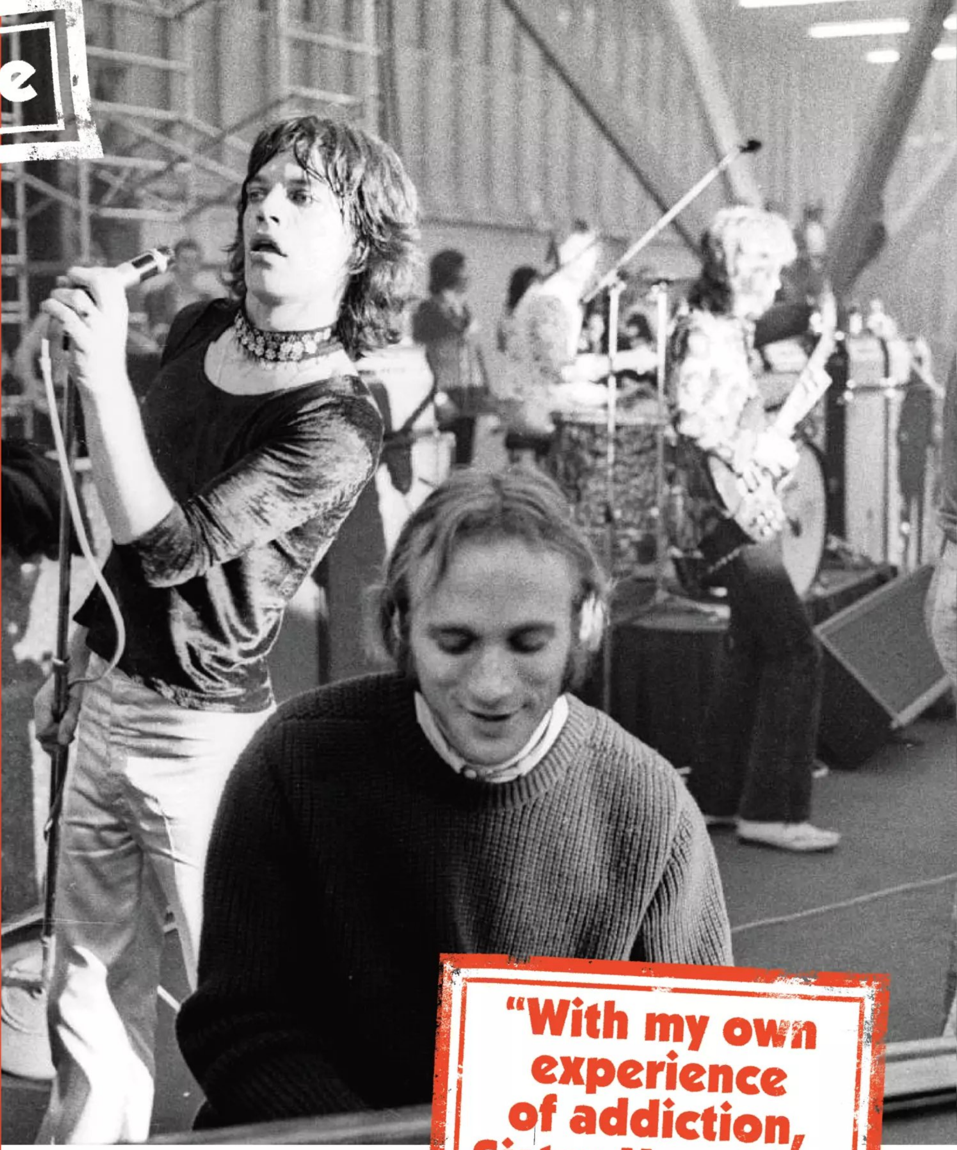
There were other stresses. With only one 16-track machine (later upgraded to 24-track) live recordings were nail-biters, with tape reels changed within seconds as bands tuned up between numbers. "If there was a second of something going wrong," says Talo, "you had to reconnect all these cables." Stones bassist Bill Wyman, who looked after the Mobile's accounts and associated salaries, recalls another issue. "The only way the engineers could see us, or us them," he says, "was via a video link-up." He concedes that despite "wonderful results" it made for an "incredibly difficult recording situation."

In the '80s, the Mobile passed on to Wyman's AIMS charity. "We used it to record 50 unknown artists throughout England for free," he tells MOJO. "Then we presented them with the master tapes of their recordings to do with as they wished."

The truck didn't seem to adapt to the digital age, with major mishaps losing live material at shows by both Diana Ross and The Pet Shop Boys. This writer visited the mobile in 1996, when it had been sold at auction to an audio dealer in Hitchin. Stripped of its effects units, its tape machines and Helios desk were intact and it was easy to stand in the lorry and 'hear' those classic recordings pumping out of the speakers.

That same year, it was sold on and shipped to New York, where it captured gigs by the Ramones and Patti Smith. Since 2001, it's been at the National Music Centre in Calgary, Canada where it's used to record both live and studio performances. Tapani Talo isn't surprised that the mobile is still on the go.

"It's from the early era of electronics that's pretty heavy duty so that's why it's still functioning," he says. "The truck is the heart of that period. I mean, it's like a Rembrandt painting."



The Aims Project

"Rolling truck Stones thing": the mobile in its current home in Calgary, Canada.

8 Sister Morphine

How to co-write with the Stones and get a credit (eventually), by Marianne Faithfull.

This is what I remember and it's quite clear. We were in London and Mick was strumming this tune all the time, a lovely tune but it had no words. And eventually I got sick of hearing it and said, "Look, Mick, let me write some."

So I wrote this story about a man who'd had an accident. He's dying, and in terrible pain and all he wants is for the nurse to bring him another shot. It's definitely a kind of junkie song except that neither Mick nor I knew much about junkies back then, although I knew more, because I already knew [beat poet] Gregory Corso and [Faithfull's first husband, art dealer] John Dunbar – people who did use narcotics. And I think, partly, if I had to put a real person in it, Sister Morphine might have been Anita [Pallenberg]. Because she had just played Nurse Bullock in the film Candy.

I recorded my version in LA in '68 with Mick and Charlie and Jack Nitzsche, who I adored – he was a monster, really, but I miss him terribly – and it turned out really well. It came out on a single with Something Better, a lovely recording. But Decca were very nervous about Sister Morphine. They weren't very bright at Decca, you know. I mean, there's actually nothing illegal going on in the song, but there was definitely a backlash against me and the Stones at the time. We had a bad reputation, which today is almost like a badge of honour.

Was it a surprise when it turned up on *Sticky Fingers*? Yes – a tremendous shock. And without my credit! I was so angry. I fought and fought until I got the credit back, and I did get it back, but it took at least 20 years. Why did they resist? Well it's a team, isn't it: Mick Jagger and Keith Richards? And it was unheard of to let someone else in. Letting a *woman* in would have been even more awful!

With my own experience of addiction, the song became much deeper for me – when I sing it, all my life experience comes rushing up to meet me. Band after band of mine loved playing it, to the extent that if I ever said, "I don't feel like doing Sister Morphine tonight," there would be a revolution! I guess it was the best song I had ever written and the best song I ever was to write.

"With my own experience of addiction, Sister Morphine became much deeper for me."

Marianne Faithfull

She Walks In Beauty, by Marianne Faithfull with Warren Ellis, is out now on BMG.

Let's sway: the Stones on-stage with Stephen Stills (front), Amsterdam, October 9, 1970; (right) the back sleeve and inserts, with tongue logo; (far right, from top) Jagger in the studio with Marianne Faithfull; Mick, Mick and Keith share an acoustic moment at The Marquee, 1971.

Henry Diltz/Cache Agency/Dalle, Brandon Wallis, Gered Mankowitz, © Alec Byrne-www.rpmarchives.com

9 Dead Flowers

Shooting up, kicking shit: a "headneck" classic is hailed by Michael Simmons

"The mixture of black and white American music had plenty of space to be explored," wrote Keith Richards in his 2010 autobiography, Life. The Stones had already written and recorded a country song – Dear Doctor on 1968's *Beggars Banquet* (the world would wait until 1975, and the *Metamorphosis* compilation, to hear their own version of the proto-country Somethings Just Stick In Your Mind). Since then, Keith had sat for Gram Parsons' tutorial on heroin, Hank Williams, Merle Haggard and George Jones. You hear it in Wild Horses, although Wild Horses doesn't have the shitkick of Dead Flowers.

But it was Mick, not Keith, who took credit for writing it. "It's a joke, really," he told MOJO in 2016. "A vulnerable lyric done in a very invulnerable way." The po' boy junkie protagonist is attempting to seduce a posh dame riding in "a rose pink Cadillac". Perhaps he'll emerge with a notch on his belt; she'll be gone while he moves on to the next conquest, tossing roses on her memory. And yet there's a rueful edge that suggests his boasts hide heartbreak: he'll still be there "with a needle and a spoon" and bedhopping "to take my pain away", while she remains "the queen of the underground".

It's deceptive: on one level a novelty, on another an examination of lust and class. Meanwhile, Mick Taylor mimics pedal steel licks and Ian Stewart plays honky-tonk piano with "bent note" splash – another *Sticky Fingers* nod to Nashville session pianist Floyd Cramer. The eleventeenth example of Americana before it had a name, Mick and the Stones have performed it as a duet with contemporary country star Brad Paisley and others, and its combo of twang and transgression made it a perfect cover song for hillbilly-headneck fuck-ups like Jerry Lee Lewis, Townes Van Zandt and Steve Earle. In other words, it's timeless.

10 Moonlight Mile

***Sticky Fingers* crawls its last 1.60934 km, asleep but awake. Mark Blake rides shotgun.**

As coldly macho as The Rolling Stones can be, they're still prone to great sensitivity, even sentimentality. Witness Moonlight Mile. It's also *Sticky Fingers'* only possible conclusion, and unimaginable anywhere else in the sequencing.

Jagger said he wrote the lyrics while bored and homesick on a train, and pieced the song together with Mick Taylor late one night at Stargroves. Taylor fooled around with an existing Keith Richards idea (nicknamed 'Japanese Thing'), but Richards himself isn't on the song.

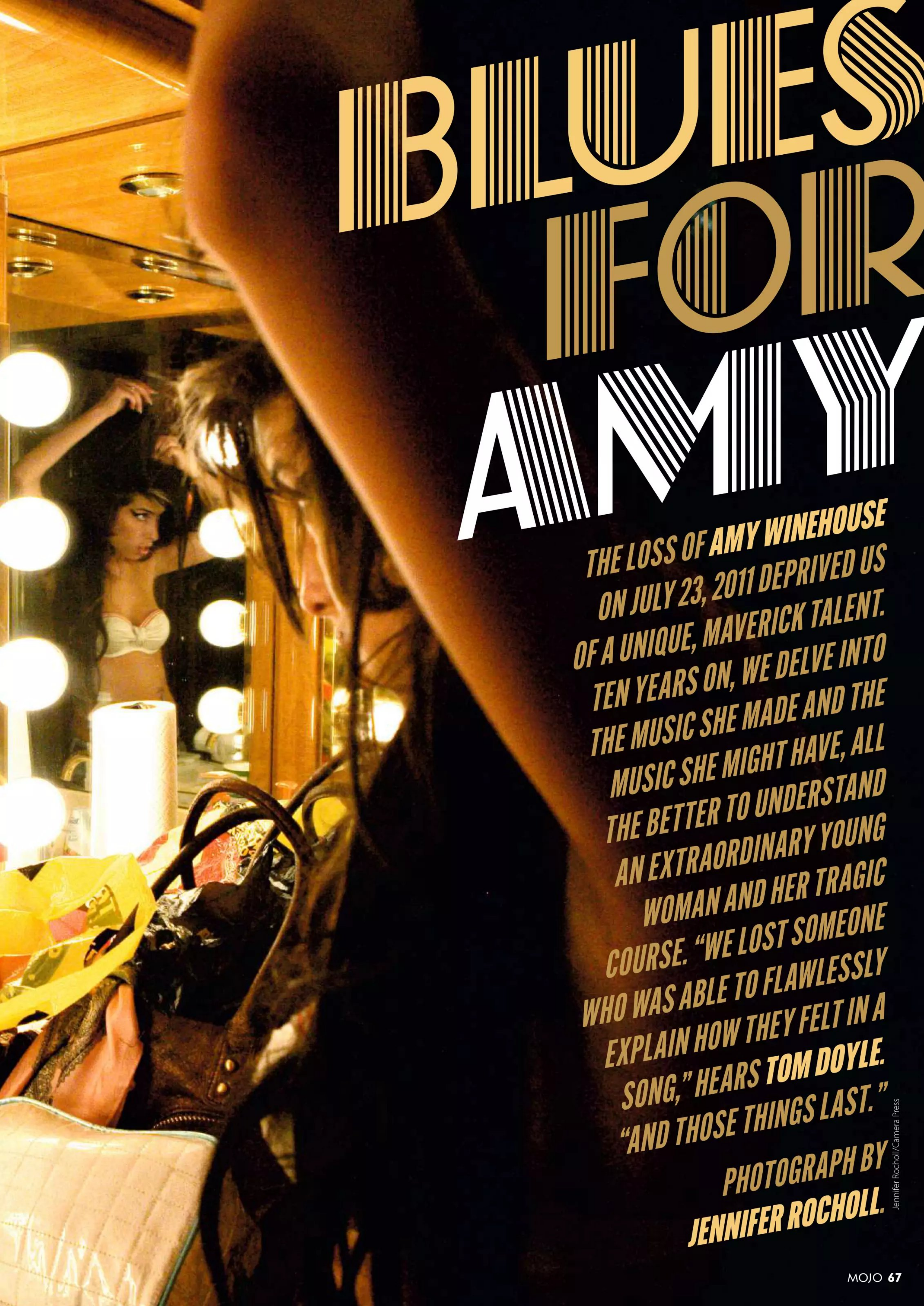
Hired hand/trumpeter Bill Price played the piano and his two-note figure at 0:18 minutes, simulated a few seconds by Jagger's girlish vocal, sounds like a Japanese koto. That's also Jagger picking out the hesitant-sounding intro on acoustic guitar. It suggests a Rolling Stone – *any* Rolling Stone – wearily climbing the steps onto the bus before falling into the arms of Morpheus.

"When the wind blows/And the rain feels cold…" drawls Jagger, punctuated by Charlie Watts' cymbal splashes and Taylor's languid fills. The lyrics veer from obvious comments about touring life ("Just another mad, mad day on the road") to the more inspired "Made a rag pile of my shiny clothes". It's Jagger tossing his costume – the silver-studded choker and skinny-rib velvet top – into a corner of the hotel room.

Here, the Stones manage that very Stones trick of sounding both utterly exhausted and wide awake at the same time. Moonlight Mile never becomes dreary because things keep happening. Paul Buckmaster's strings arrive at the 2:18-minute mark to counterpoint Jagger's voice with swooping violins and cellos. A minute later Taylor weighs in on electric guitar. It even has a fake-ish ending, allowing them all to play tag with each other for a further minute. Then, finally, The Rolling Stones are home.

Bits and pieces transformed by genius. Like we said before: it's *Sticky Fingers'* only possible conclusion.

Amy Winehouse, backstage at Coachella, Indio, California, where she was way down the bill on Friday, April 27, 2007.



BLUES FOR AMY

THE LOSS OF **AMY WINEHOUSE** ON JULY 23, 2011 DEPRIVED US OF A UNIQUE, MAVERICK TALENT. TEN YEARS ON, WE DELVE INTO THE MUSIC SHE MADE AND THE MUSIC SHE MIGHT HAVE, ALL THE BETTER TO UNDERSTAND AN EXTRAORDINARY YOUNG WOMAN AND HER TRAGIC COURSE. "WE LOST SOMEONE WHO WAS ABLE TO FLAWLESSLY EXPLAIN HOW THEY FELT IN A SONG," HEARS **TOM DOYLE.** "AND THOSE THINGS LAST."

PHOTOGRAPH BY **JENNIFER ROCHOLL.**

Jennifer Rocholl/Camera Press

SPRING WAS TURNING TO SUMMER AS THE 18-YEAR-OLD AMY Winehouse landed at Miami International Airport. It was the last week of May 2002 and the nascent singer was newly signed to EMI Music Publishing, who had decided to try matching her with Fugees/Nas producer Salaam Remi. Winehouse and her 21-year-old manager, Nick Shymansky, both just kids really, were buzzed to be in the States: rolling around in a hired convertible, living it up at the beachside art deco Raleigh Hotel.

It had taken some convincing by their shared A&R man Guy Moot before Remi had agreed to meeting Winehouse, having been unmoved by what he considered to be her Erykah Badu-lite neo-soul demos. But on day one at Remi's downtown Creative Space studio, when Winehouse walked in with her guitar, sat down, and played and sang The Girl From Ipanema for him, her talent instantly shone.

Take it to the beach: 21-year-old Amy with first manager Nick Shymansky, Miami, 2002; (right) Salaam Remi in his New York studio, 2013.

"It lit up the entire room," Remi tells MOJO today. "You could really hear her voice projecting and that's what caught me. She was hitting jazz notes and nailing it with the skill of a 75-year-old woman who'd been doing that forever."

Immediately inspired, the pair picked up on the jazzy bossa nova vibes and quickly wrote a song together called Cherry, in which Winehouse seemed to be singing about her best friend and confessor, revealed in the closing line to be "my new guitar". It set the lyrical tone for what was to become Winehouse's debut album, *Frank*. "It was her having the idea of the joke she wanted to tell," says Remi, "and how she was gonna build this song to get to that punchline."

Musicians and producers who worked with Amy Winehouse all have similar stories, building a vivid picture: a singer with skills that seemed out of time – beamed from the golden ages of jazz and soul; a writer with the gift of spinning her personal experiences into candid songs that were variously poignant, catchy, catty and hilarious. As a girl growing up in Southgate, north London, she'd discovered her voice by singing along to Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra and jazz soloists. As a young artist in 2002, and as Salaam Remi was discovering, she was beginning to take these influences and shape them into a musical character that was completely her own.

While her death a decade ago makes her story a tragedy – ours as much as hers, for who knows how many more timeless gems she'd have written and sung – she was the first to see the funny side in even the darkest topics. It was part of her genius, and certainly her charm.

"It's funny," she said when I asked about the role of her father Mitch's infidelity in the *Frank* song What Is It About Men?. "I write about personal situations, but I like to give it a little punchline, so you can look back and laugh. Rather than go, 'O, woe is me.' I like to be able to go, 'Well, that was a bit of a shitty one. But I got through.'"

THE RAPPORT BETWEEN REMI and Winehouse that helped unlock the latter's talent in 2002 was built on fun and head games. In Miami, the producer offered to recycle a funky loop he'd built from The Incredible Bongo Band's 1973 take on The Shadows' Apache and had used on Nas's recent single Made You Look, but teasingly withheld it until he felt she'd written a song that deserved it.

"I was like, 'All right, the beat is muted,'" laughs Remi. "'If the song is strong enough, then we'll bring the beat back in.'"

Winehouse duly upped her game, and the result was a sultry yet cynical examination of sex and love: In My Bed.

"Salaam and her had this brother/sister relationship," says Darcus Beese, Winehouse's A&R man when she subsequently signed to Island Records. "He was one of the very few people that she would be really comfortable with in making records. He was her mentor and Salaam's place was a bit of a sanctuary for her."

When *Frank* was released in October 2003, its commercial performance was disappointing. Winehouse herself criticised the "fake strings" added to one track, Take The Box (which Darcus Beese now accepts was "my fault") and even lambasted the team at Island as "idiots… but they're nice idiots". It was a marker, the sound of an inchoate ➢

"SHE LIT UP THE ENTIRE ROOM. SHE WAS HITTING JAZZ NOTES WITH THE SKILL OF A 75-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WHO'D BEEN DOING THAT FOREVER."

SALAAM REMI

Capital Pictures, Dan Hallman/Invision/AP/Shutterstoc, Ross Kirton/Eyevine

Amy in Camden, 2009: “I like to be able to go, ‘Well that was a bit of a shitty one. But I got through’…

Winehouse in New York City, 2003; (left, clockwise from top left) Amy and brother Alex, circa 1991; self-portraits from her notebook, 2005; Paul O'Duffy, producer; Darcus Beese, Island A&R.

"I WRITE ABOUT PERSONAL SITUATIONS, BUT I LIKE TO GIVE IT A LITTLE PUNCHLINE, SO YOU CAN LOOK BACK AND LAUGH." AMY WINEHOUSE

≺ artist rapidly taking individualistic form, but the leap from there to what she did next – simply, one of the great albums of the 21st century – remains astonishing.

"Amy was so intelligent," says Dale Davis, her bassist and live musical director from 2003 until her death. "She'd only observed the process of recording *once* and that's all she needed to see what was going on. Then she got it together for *Back To Black*."

Nonetheless, outwardly at least, Amy Winehouse never seemed to be at all impressed by her own talents, particularly as a singer. While those around her were frequently astounded by her voice, she merely shrugged.

"I never thought I was talented, or particularly special," she told me in February 2007, four months into *Back To Black*'s romp towards 16 million worldwide sales. "I just thought, 'Yeah, I can sing, cool.' A lot of people can sing, d'you know what I mean? I still don't think it's that special, to be honest."

SAMAR
S-111 A
(MY GIRL) SHE'S A FOX
THE ICEMEN
SAMAR RECORDINGS, INC., ROCHESTER, N.Y.

THE FIRST CLUES AS TO THE MUSICAL INFLUENCES that would shape *Back To Black* were the ever-changing snippets of songs Winehouse left as her outgoing voicemail messages throughout 2005. Although they weren't touring together that year, Dale Davis called the singer often to check in with her.

"You could hear on her answering machine the style of music going from the '60s girl groups to The Specials," he says. "So, you knew the direction she was going in. She wouldn't necessarily talk about it, but you knew what was going through her mind."

In truth, Winehouse was having a terrible year, heartbroken after splitting from her then-boyfriend (and future husband) Blake Fielder-Civil. Reaching for a bottle of Jack Daniel's from the moment she woke, she was a sobbing mess, with one particular song providing the repeat-play soundtrack to her romantic grief.

"I was listening to the fucking Shangri-Las' I Can Never Go Home Anymore on a loop," Amy told me, her face lighting up when relating the grim melodrama of Shadow Morton's 1965 tale of a lovestruck schoolgirl who runs away from home, only to fatally break the heart of her mother.

"It's the most depressing song," she marvelled. "I love that bit: 'She grew so lonely in the end/The angels picked her for their friend.' I'd be like that, glug glug glug, crying my eyes out. To the point where my flatmate used to come home from work, see me on the kitchen floor with my bottle and be like, 'Urgh,' and just turn around and leave. She knew there was nothing she could do."

Producer Paul O'Duffy, co-writer of Wake Up Alone, the first song completed for *Back To Black*, similarly recalls Winehouse being in thrall to The Shangri-Las.

"She loved the idea with the '60s girl groups that it's everything or nothing, in terms of the relationship," he says. "She was very interested in the devastation aspect of it. For it to be brutal in that way and not a nuanced thing. Y'know, 'My heart's bleeding, I'm gonna die.'"

O'Duffy had previous experience recording the self-titled 1996 debut album of north London soul enigma Lewis Taylor. The people at Island Records figured he could creatively negotiate with another "difficult" artist. The producer's first impression of Winehouse was that she was friendly, yet somehow distant and easily distracted. "I've met Van Morrison once before," he says, "and it was that same sort of a slight disconnect."

In early writing sessions at O'Duffy's home studio in High Barnet – sometimes cancelled when Winehouse turned up drunk after pulling an all-nighter – she didn't seem to be engaging with the track they were working on, which had been inspired by the producer introducing the singer to Deep In The Night, the closing song on 1972 album *Sarah Vaughan With Michel Legrand*.

"She had a book, and she would be drawing pictures of herself with love hearts and things, and you knew she was off in another world," O'Duffy explains. "Then she started writing lyrics and at a certain point, she said, 'Oh, I've got something.' In the normal

Charles Moriarty/Iconic Images, Nick Stern/WENN.com, courtesy of Walter Briski Jr, drawing courtesy of Paul O'Duffy, John Ferguson/Camera Press, Getty

process, a singer might share that lyrical or melodic idea. But it wasn't, 'Shall I just try this bit here?' She sang it in one take. I was like, 'Wow, where does this come from?'"

John Harrison, AKA P*nut, had a very similar experience with Winehouse when, around the same time, he produced the original demo of He Can Only Hold Her, based on a sample from (My Girl) She's A Fox by The Icemen, the 1966 R&B single featuring Jimi Hendrix on guitar.

"I'd be constructing the track, but she wasn't really forthcoming in what she was gonna be doing," Harrison remembers. "She was really private about it. I kept on saying, 'Right, we've been in here four days.' What the fuck, basically?

"So, I didn't have any concept of the lyrics or her melody until she one day said, 'OK, set up the mike.' She just recorded two vocals and they really were totally perfect. It was amazing. She'd worked everything out in her head."

Back over in Miami in December 2005, Winehouse hooked up once again with Salaam Remi, with one page alone of her lyric book yielding the beginnings of *Back To Black* tracks Addicted, Just Friends and Tears Dry On Their Own. Together the pair went record shopping for further inspiration, buying up albums by The "5" Royales and The Platters and listening to Neil Diamond's 1958 lovelorn weepie Blue Destiny.

Moreover, having heard the tales of Winehouse's drunkenness and blown sessions emanating from London, Remi was very happy to see that the singer had cleaned up her act.

"She had a thing where she didn't ever drink when she came out to work with me," he says. "When we started *Back To Black* her eyes were really clear and really crystal green. So, I could look at her and tell she'd detoxed from alcohol."

Nonetheless, despite Winehouse making creative headway in Miami, Island Records and EMI Music Publishing were keen to throw the net wider. "They suggested that she go to New York and work with Mark Ronson," says Remi. "Which she wasn't really up for. She was like, 'Why have I got to go there?'"

MARK RONSON'S ALLIDO STUDIO WAS LOCATED in a former industrial building on Mercer Street in SoHo. The place was still equipped with a forbiddingly creaky elevator with doors you opened by hand, and so when Winehouse first arrived at his door in March 2006 Ronson decided to go down and meet her in the street. And there she was, unmistakable in her teetering, soon-to-be-iconic beehive, satin ➢

LATE NIGHT VINYL

THE RECORDS THAT PLAYED ON AMY WINEHOUSE'S INNER JUKEBOX, BY DANNY ECCLESTON.

THE SHANGRI-LAS

I CAN NEVER GO HOME ANYMORE

(Red Bird single, 1965)

THE SHANGRI-LAS
I CAN NEVER GO HOME ANYMORE

A US Number 6 for the Queens girl group. Long sections of deadpan spoken word from Mary Weiss – telling of a runaway teen and the tragic impact on her mother – up the gothic ante, while the girls' unvarnished voices lend a documentary *verité*. Like punk Spector.

SARAH VAUGHAN

SARAH VAUGHAN WITH MICHEL LEGRAND

(Mainstream, 1972)

sarah vaughan
michel legrand

Late-ish Vaughan but as "Divine" as ever, with an extra-rich bluesiness in her lower register. Winehouse would cite Deep In The Night, the closing song from this collaboration with the French film music maestro. You can see how its frank sensuality and theme of early-hours longing hit home.

NEIL DIAMOND

BLUE DESTINY

(from In My Lifetime, 1996)

NEIL DIAMOND
In My Lifetime

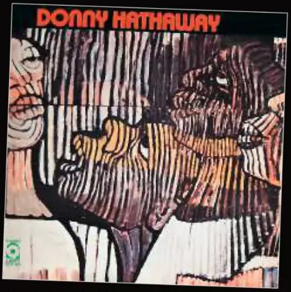
Diamond called this 1958 demo his first composition to have "an emotional effect", but it would take the release of an archive comp for it to see the light of day. An Everly Brothers influence is clear on this elegant song for the dumped, one of *Back To Black*'s audio inspirers.

DINAH WASHINGTON

TEACH ME TONIGHT

(Mercury single, 1954)

Exquisite phrasing and crystal diction from a singer who combined sophistication and passionate intensity. Winehouse sang this on Jools Holland's New Year's Eve TV show in 2004 and made "Let's start with the ABC of it/Roll right down to the XYZ of it" sound as slyly erotic as Sammy Cahn surely intended.



DONNY HATHAWAY

DONNY HATHAWAY

(Atco, 1971)

Winehouse always noted her debt to Hathaway, who died in 1979 beset by mental health problems (see MOJO 303). From this album of covers, she fixed on his aching take on Leon Russell's dramatic A Song For You. Amy's version on *Lioness: Hidden Treasures* sounds like she's barely clinging on.

BILLIE HOLIDAY

BODY AND SOUL

(Vocalion single, 1940)

Amy had more than a touch of Holiday's slur and sense that she was singing mainly to herself. This 1940 version of the tune Winehouse would tackle with Tony Bennett is beautiful and poised; a 1957 version on Verve, cut two years before Holiday's death, is spare and poignantly crushed.

RUBY AND THE ROMANTICS

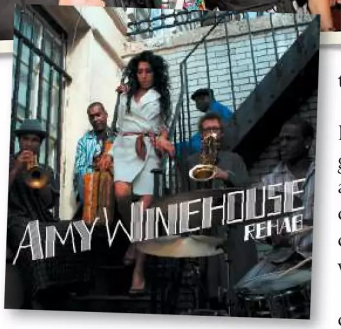
OUR DAY WILL COME

(Kapp single, 1963)

RUBY AND THE ROMANTICS
OUR DAY WILL COME

The deliciously creamy alto pipes of Akron's Ruby Nash were never better framed than by the tiki-bar bossa nova and glockenspiel-a-go-go of her group's debut (US Number 1) smash. Amy's 2002 recording – buffed up for the posthumous *Lioness* – is one of the most open and sunny things she ever did.

Neil Diamond in 1967. His Blue Destiny demo had "an emotional effect" on Winehouse.



≺ jacket, jeans shorts and leopard skin ballet pumps.

Ronson introduced himself and Winehouse gave him a puzzled look. Perhaps imagining the archetype of a white New York hip-hop producer to be someone like Rick Rubin, she said, "Oh, you're Mark Ronson? I thought you were like an old guy with a beard or something." Upstairs in the studio, to break the awkwardness and build trust, Ronson talked to her about music, discovering shared tastes in Motown, early-'70s soul and '90s hip-hop. The singer then introduced the producer to The Shangri-Las.

"I was really inspired," Ronson told MOJO in 2015. "Both by her and the kind of music she was talking about wanting to make. So, when she left that night, I wrote the piano part and the music for [title track] Back To Black and then I played it for her the next morning."

True to character, Winehouse didn't give much away, and left to make a call. In fact, she was talking to Darcus Beese in London, arranging to stay on in New York for another five days to work with Ronson. Taking her guitar and a tape of the instrumental into another room, Winehouse quickly came up with the lyrics and melody. "She wrote Back To Black in, like, three hours," Ronson remembered. "It's crazy."

The singer was once again similarly swift when it came to nailing her always part-improvised vocal takes. "It was so honest," Ronson stressed. "She would never sing it the same way twice, 'cos that felt un-genuine. It's like, 'Well, why would I do it again the same exactly? Then it becomes false.'"

For his part, the producer saw through Winehouse's apparent disregard of her vocal talents: "There was a side of her that knew she had a fucking amazing voice and could smoke any singer out there. But she'd make a throwaway, self-deprecating joke the second the take was over. Y'know, 'Oh, that's shit.' But kinda knowing that it was amazing at the same time."

On a break from the studio, wandering around SoHo, Winehouse told Ronson how, in the depths of the previous year, her management had suggested she go to a treatment facility for her drinking. It was beginning of Rehab.

"I sang the hook just out of nowhere, as a joke," Winehouse told me. "He started laughing and he went, 'Who's that?' I went, 'What do you mean? I just made it up.' He was like, 'That would be so cool if that was a song.' The songs just wrote themselves because I had so much subject matter."

At first, Winehouse imagined Rehab as a slow Johnny Cash-styled country blues, before Ronson souped it up with Motown beats and scratchy electric guitars. To Winehouse's ears, it sounded like The Libertines. "Mark was like, 'Aren't they the shit Strokes?'" she remembered. "I said, 'Mark, The Libertines made people proud to be British. That was London for a real spell, y'know.'"

Other tracks quickly followed: the sad and resigned Love Is A Losing Game; the brazen sex comedy of You Know I'm No Good, with its admission that she'd two-timed Fielder-Civil and vivid details including that "likkle carpet burn".

When I asked Winehouse how much of the latter lyric was true, she was surprisingly mortified.

"Oh! Like, come on!" she exclaimed, flushing with embarrassment. "I forget these things, though, d'you know what I mean? Yeah. Blake hates it. He's really proud of me, but it's so personal it must be hard. When I'm like, pen to paper, I'm the most honest I get."

Mark Ronson took the basic tracks he'd recorded at Allido with Winehouse and fleshed them out with amorphous retro soul outfit The Dap-Kings in their Brooklyn studio, Daptone, housed in a Bushwick brownstone.

"It was a pretty rundown, shitty place," says Dap-Kings guitarist Tom Brenneck. "When I made the pilgrimage to Detroit to go to Motown, I was blown away by how much bigger their live room was. High ceilings and the whole shebang. Man, there was a high ceiling at Daptone because they ripped it out and you were looking at the pipes to the kitchen above."

The Dap-Kings played live together in the room, crammed virtually shoulder-to-shoulder, recording to tape. Winehouse was by this point back in London and so Ronson spun in her isolated vocals, as the band performed, using a CD DJ unit. "Maybe it'd be a little out of time here and there," says Brenneck, "but Mark would basically manipulate her a cappella to go along with us."

Darcus Beese flew to New York to hear the results at Allido and was instantly blown away. "Yeah, you could say that," he laughs. "The first song Mark played me was Rehab and I was just like, 'Rewind that tune, man! What the fuck is that?' Mark and Amy had sat down for weeks and really homed in on what it was she was trying to achieve. People were doing all that pastiche throwback stuff at the time, but Amy was the real deal."

MEANWHILE, THE SONGS THAT WINEHOUSE had sketched out with Salaam Remi in Miami now sounded decidedly downtempo in comparison to the Ronson-produced tracks. Beese: "I played Salaam the Mark Ronson tracks that had that urgency and drive and I said, 'Look, I've got this with Mark, and I've got this with you, Salaam. How do we bridge the gap?' Salaam said, 'Leave it with me.'"

Remi remembers, "I said, 'All right, cool, send her out and I'm gonna figure it out and see where it needs to go.' Darcus was like, 'How do I tie it together?' I was like, 'It's her… she'll tie it together.'"

The producer proceeded to reconfigure the slow acoustic jazz of Me And Mr Jones as an attitude-charged doo wop track. Just Friends, originally named I've Been Drinking, was transformed from a moody ballad into pacey reggae. But it was Remi's ➢

Avalon.red (3), Alpha Press, Camera Press

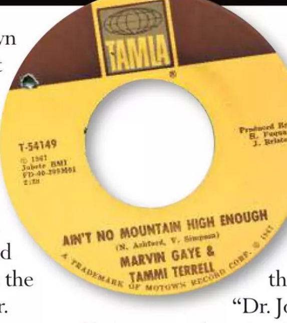
Amy on-stage in Hamburg, 2007, with Dale Davis; (opposite, clockwise from top left) on-stage with Mark Ronson, BRIT Awards, Earls Court, February 20, 2008; Amy and Ronson escape the paparazzi; with Blake Fielder-Civil, 2007; with father Mitch and mother Janis, Ivor Novello Awards, London, 2008; the Rehab single.

> "YOU COULD HEAR ON HER ANSWERING MACHINE THE STYLE OF MUSIC GOING FROM THE '60S GIRL GROUPS TO THE SPECIALS. YOU KNEW THE DIRECTION SHE WAS GOING IN."
>
> DALE DAVIS

AMY WINEHOUSE
TAMA

Winehouse at Glastonbury, 2007; (opposite, clockwise from top left) The Dap-Kings, 2003, with Sharon Jones, Tom Brenneck (far right) and Neal Sugarman (third from right); on-stage and in some distress, Belgrade, Serbia, June 18, 2011; with rapper Nas, Covent Garden, London, July 2010.

"WHEN WE STARTED *BACK TO BLACK* HER EYES WERE REALLY CLEAR AND REALLY CRYSTAL GREEN. I COULD TELL SHE'D DETOXED." SALAAM REMI



≺ dramatic overhaul of Tears Dry On Their Own that would produce one of *Back To Black*'s standout moments, after he discovered online leaks of some of the isolated backing tracks of Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell's Ain't No Mountain High Enough.

"I was sitting there listening to it and I was telling Amy, 'Tears Dry could [work over] that,'" Remi says. "She just could not hear it. I almost had to sing it pretty much to get her to figure it out, and she still was frustrated. Being One-Take Amy, that's the most [outtake] swearing that I recorded of her, ever.

"But it was just really the whole idea of her singing very sad lyrics against an encouraging backing track. That juxtaposition, and also making it one of the faster records on the album, kind of gave it another level of spark."

Originally, the plan had been for Remi and Winehouse to complete these final *Back To Black* sessions at his Creative Space studio. But the producer had recently moved into a new house, and the singer was far keener on working there.

"It was a two-storey ceiling, wooden living room," he says. "She walked in and was like, 'I want to sing right here.' She recorded all of her vocals standing in the middle of the floor. I just put all the equipment in that house. I bought a piano, put in a Rhodes and the organ and the drum kit. You hear the sound of that room on Me And Mr Jones."

Back in New York, Winehouse began rehearsing with The Dap-Kings, who became her American touring band for a series of shows and TV appearances. Sax player Neal Sugarman set up the first rehearsal in a friend's basement in Brooklyn.

"I didn't even think, 'Oh, I should get some fancy rehearsal space in the city, because this is like a budding rock star,'" he laughs. "I think she actually really liked that part of it. She was real late to the rehearsal because she went into our favourite record store, Academy Records in Williamsburg, and showed up with a stack of Dinah Washington and cool doo wop and soul records. So, immediately it was really easy to connect with her. It was like, 'Oh, she digs these old records like we do.'"

Winehouse's first New York show with The Dap-Kings was at the 180-capacity Joe's Pub in the East Village on January 16, 2007. Tom Brenneck remembers there being an instant industry buzz around the singer: "Dr. John was in the audience, Jay-Z and Beyoncé, Mos Def. All these iconic musicians in that tiny little space."

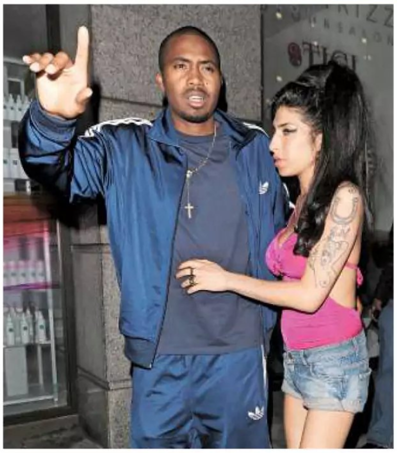
As the shows progressed – from South By Southwest to Coachella to The Roxy in Los Angeles – it was clear to Neal Sugarman that *Back To Black* was appealing to all types. "It was an eye-opening experience," he says. "We were playing to such a wide variety of people. Like, black people, white people, gay, straight, young, old, misfits. People were flipping out hearing those songs. It was super fun to be playing that music for people who were really loving that album and having a chance to see her perform. Which, y'know, we know now was a rare experience, unfortunately."

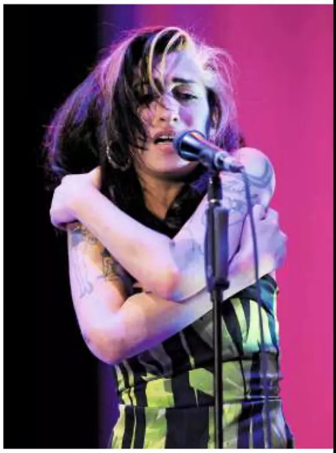
"She didn't love performing," reckons Tom Brenneck. "She would be happy to just fuck off in the middle of the show. We were kind of used to putting on *shows*, really engaging with the audience. She would kill it, but I don't think she loved it, and these shows were jam-packed, sold out."

Released in October 2006, *Back To Black* sold quickly, turning six times platinum in the UK alone by the end of 2007. Dale Davis, leading her British live band, watched it blow up first-hand. He even witnessed Winehouse taking some rare credit for her accomplishments.

"I said, 'Well done, Amy, it's amazing what you've achieved,'"

Alpha Press, O'Rourke/GoffPhotos.com, Getty, Harvey Fox





Davis recalls. "And she said, 'I knew what I was doing.' She didn't mean that in an arrogant way, but she'd got the formula right. The songs are very short, to the point, so descriptive. She was not only a great performer, but an absolutely incredible songwriter."

"THE NEXT ALBUM'S ALL GONNA BE ABOUT songs that were left over from this one," Amy insisted to me at the start of 2007. "'Cos I've got so much. As long as I've got a voice and I've got two hands and I can play guitar and sing, y'know, I'm the world's happiest woman really."

But as we now know, outside influences, sudden megawatt fame and runaway habits overwhelmed Winehouse throughout 2007 and into 2008: her dangerous reunion with and marriage to Fielder-Civil, intense daily harassment by the paparazzi, her seemingly uncontrollable urges to obliterate herself with crack and heroin.

"Her whole situation escalated so quickly that it caught everyone so unawares," says Dale Davis. "At the start of 2008, the performances started to get erratic. This is no slight on Amy at all, y'know, because it was the pressures of life."

Davis acknowledges that Winehouse's drug use took a perhaps irreparable toll on her voice but says that there were times when her singing was still dazzling and deeply felt. "Yeah, I think the indulgences did have an effect," he states. "I'm not sure if she'd damaged her lungs. But I spent an evening with her in 2008 after she'd won all the Grammys and we were listening to Thelonious Monk and she was just singing all these parts. She felt every single note and they're complex to follow. She just had it all down."

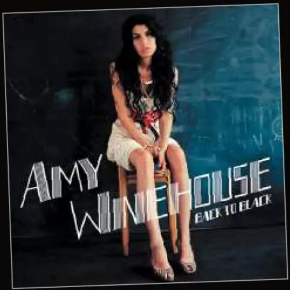
Big offers arrived in the wake of *Back To Black*, not least for Winehouse to write and sing the theme for 2008 James Bond film, Quantum Of Solace. Mark Ronson and Bond soundtrack composer David Arnold worked up a track that was, in the words of the latter, "a contemporary post-'60s piece".

"I was on the baritone guitar playing very John Barry-type stuff," says Tom Brenneck. "The way Mark does anything, he went in hard and really tried to write something special. It would have been incredible, man."

Progress on the track stalled when Winehouse failed to come up with any completed lyrics or melodies. Ronson publicly stated that Amy was "not ready to record any music". Salaam Remi, in ➢

VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE

AMY, AMY, AMY, AND MORE AMY IN VICTORIA SEGAL'S VINTAGE WINEHOUSE PLAYLIST.



TEARS DRY ON THEIR OWN

(Back To Black, 2006)

Constructed around Ain't No Mountain High Enough – here, more statement of pure abjection than declaration of love's all-conquering power – this beautiful study in romantic hopelessness unfolds in the Hopper-like "blue shade" of a hotel room. "He walks away, the sun goes down" – it's a relationship's final frame on endless repeat.

I HEARD LOVE IS BLIND

(Frank, 2003)

AMY WINEHOUSE
FRANK

There's a filthy, flirty Sands Hotel playfulness to this role-reversing revenge fantasy, an all-cats-are-grey apology for infidelity that sees Winehouse argue she only slept with another man because he resembled her boyfriend: "He's just not as tall but I couldn't tell/It was dark and I was lying down."

IN MY BED

(Frank, 2003)

Another *Frank* power move, this track separates love and sex with a withering eye, a warning to a returning lover not to get too comfortable: "Listen, this isn't a reunion/So sorry if I turn my head." The skittish trip-hop backing, meanwhile, suggests the singer's attention is already elsewhere, the time for pillow talk over.

VALERIE

(Single, 2007)

VALERIE
MARK RONSON

Originally recorded for Mark Ronson's solo *Version* LP, this cover of The Zutons' 2006 single was one of the rare modern tracks to infiltrate Winehouse's pre-1967 tastes. She makes the most of it, every line imprinted with yearning desire, the sound of somebody asking for something they know they might not get.

REHAB

(Amy Winehouse At The BBC, 2021)

From origins as a dark, self-deprecating joke, this personal protest song became harder to hear over time. This live version from a Porchester Hall show in 2007 catches all its jutting defiance, Winehouse carried through its undertow by her band, her voice flying on "I just, I just need a friend."

HALF TIME

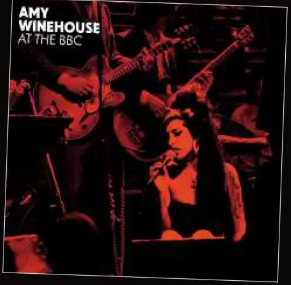
(Lioness: Hidden Treasures, 2011)

This mellow, fluting outtake from *Frank* (developed for *Lioness* with Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson on drums) could stand as a Winehouse origin story: a sweet-voiced, heartfelt testament to music's power. Faultlines and nerve endings still show through, though: "When Frank Sinatra sings," she swoons, "it's too much to take."

HELP YOURSELF

(Frank, 2003)

With hindsight, the Doris Day sample is heavily ironic, but there's a breeze and brightness here, a reminder of Winehouse's early direct charm. Over a gingham-patterned groove, Winehouse tells her older lover – with a philosophy degree, no less – that she's the one wise beyond her years: no fools suffered here.



YOU KNOW I'M NO GOOD

(Amy Winehouse At The BBC, 2021)

With its beatnik percussion and close-up vocals, there's a pleasing intimacy to this 2007 radio session cut. Yet there's nothing laid-back in Winehouse's forensic document of infidelity, the flipside of I Heard Love Is Blind. Bar, bedroom, bathtub – she ensures you see it all, but the carpet burn is nothing compared to the self-laceration.

LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

(Back To Black, 2006)

This Prince favourite was included on a Cambridge University English paper, elegant gambling metaphors and judgmental gods giving it a classical beauty, but there's nothing academic about it: this comes from hard-lived experience. Transcending the chaos that created it, it's a fabulous display of control and concision, marble-solid testament to Winehouse's gifts.

BACK TO BLACK

(Back To Black, 2006)

For pure drama, Winehouse never bettered this: from the set-up, immediate as a movie script ("He left no time to regret/Kept his dick wet") to the tolling bells, it's grand theatre. Yet as the darkness rolls in, there's a real sense of a light going out – not for the first time, not for the last.

"THE THIRD ALBUM COULD'VE BEEN ANYTHING. SHE'D ALREADY GROWN SO MANY LEVELS. AND SHE WAS OBSESSIVE." **SALAAM REMI**

< England at the time, drove down to the studio, The Doghouse in Henley-on-Thames, where Winehouse was attempting to work.

"Granted she wasn't in her best shape," Remi says. "She'd carved into a piece of wood in the studio, part of the furniture, with a knife, like a heart with a bow going through it, that said, 'Mark Loves Mark.' (*Laughs*) I looked at it and I was like, 'You're an asshole.'"

Remi asked the singer if she had anything else she'd been working on and she opened her book to show him a lyric titled Between The Cheats. "She grabs the guitar, and she starts playing around with it," he says. "She starts mumbling a little bit with the lyrics. So, I played a little bit of piano, a little of guitar, put bass and the drums on it. Then she goes in the booth and she basically sang the song."

Further sessions were booked with Remi in May 2008 at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios near Bath, but the distractions of the capital were too close for Winehouse to resist. Then, in 2009, Remi and Winehouse found themselves on the eastern Caribbean island of Saint Lucia at the same time. By this point Winehouse was free of hard drugs, still drinking but comparatively on the mend, spending her days horse-riding and swimming in the sea.

Remi suggested they try to record some tracks in the house he'd rented. Dale Davis and the UK band were flying in to play the Saint Lucia Jazz Festival with the singer in the first week of May. The creative stars seemed to be aligning.

"But that trip wasn't fruitful as far as the recording," Remi laments. "She wrote a lot of stuff. We ended up having the full tracklist, but we just didn't get the chance to record it." The problem, once again, was Winehouse's lack of focus. "She'd be there," the producer adds, "but then she'd go off for one too many horseback rides for me."

BACK IN LONDON, FRESH ATTEMPTS WERE MADE to push forward with the third album in the latter half of 2009. Salaam Remi worked with Winehouse in the attic of a house that she lived in for a short time back in Southgate, together recording a version of Leon Russell's A Song For You (known to the singer through Donny Hathaway's 1971 version on his eponymous second album). Then, at the start of 2010, the sessions moved to Assault & Battery Studios in Willesden, north-west London.

"Those were probably the last proper sessions," Remi says. "I can't say that there were finished tracks. We had a running list. Every song that she had a title for. She had it all in the book and I knew the lyrics and I knew what I had to get done. I was just waiting for the green light: 'OK, now we're gonna record.'"

Amid the false starts and frustrations, ideas kept springing up: a jazz album involving Questlove and Mos Def; a record of what Winehouse imagined as Wu-Tang Clan-style "battle raps". Salaam Remi even remembers making a start on a project with the singer based on sampling Vince Guaraldi's compositions for the Charlie Brown animations.

"So, we had ideas and pieces and things that we laid out," he says. "It could've been anything. She'd already grown so many levels. And she was obsessive. So, whatever she got into, she was gonna go all the way there."

Wounds inflicted over the nixed Bond theme healed, Winehouse had even begun talking to Mark Ronson about working together again.

"We had time scheduled to go in, in October 2011, and we'd spoken a couple of times," Ronson told MOJO. "I was always hoping we were going to go back in."

As to any future musical direction Winehouse might have pursued, Ronson reasoned that "obviously jazz was gonna be at the core. That's what felt the most, I guess, innate, and close to her in the way that she wrote."

Salaam Remi was in London in the July of 2011 and planned to visit Winehouse at her Camden Square house on Saturday the 23rd. He called ahead and left a message for the singer's security guard, Andrew Morris. "He calls me back and says, 'She passed.' I said, 'What do you mean?' I ended up going to the house and outside there were already maybe two or three press cars, so I run around the back. Yeah, and that was that."

The St Pancras Coroner's Court report attributed Amy Winehouse's death to alcohol poisoning. Her system had likely been weakened by years of bulimia. Meanwhile, she had refused psychological therapy to combat her alcoholism.

"She only needed to take one step to try and get herself back," says Dale Davis. "But unfortunately, that one step was always too great."

IN THE NUMBED MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED AMY'S passing, the creative teams and Island Records began piecing together a posthumous album. *Lioness: Hidden Treasures*, released in December 2011, was understandably patchy.

"It was what it was," says Salaam Remi. "It made me look back and really listen to it all." Given the spontaneity with which Winehouse liked to record, there wasn't much to choose from. "It was like, 'Oh wow, there aren't other takes of these vocals,'" Remi stresses.

In Miami, Remi put finishing touches to various tracks, including Between The Cheats, a lovers rock take on '60s R&B group Ruby And The Romantics' Our Day Will Come, and the spy thriller-ish Like Smoke, with added rhymes from Nas, which found the rapper imagining a poignant search around Camden "hunting for the answers".

"'Like smoke I hang around and be your balance,'" says Remi, quoting Winehouse's lyric. "She was hanging round our [mix] balance (*laughs*). Hanging over our shoulders."

As to usable Amy Winehouse music that might remain in the vault, Remi sounds ambivalent. "There are recordings, there are pieces," he says. "I'm sure someone could scour the bottom and make it something. I probably could… maybe in 20 years."

Ultimately, a decade on from her death, it seems that the power and impact of Amy Winehouse's music has only grown stronger.

"This is the big thing," stresses Dale Davis. "It's amazing. I'm meeting more and more people who, no matter what age, they're influenced by her. The influence never goes away. I look at her now as the first star of this millennium."

"She could naturally write great songs and they came from a place of pain," says Tom Brenneck. "Which makes people just instantly feel them. Any songwriter who writes from that place well, like Hank Williams or somebody, you're gonna get incredible songs that go outside the genre. Which is what she did. Love Is A Losing Game could be a country song."

Salaam Remi calls Love Is A Losing Game a modern standard. He mentions how highly Prince rated the song, performing it live with Winehouse at a London aftershow at the O2 Indigo in September 2007, and subsequently sanctioning his recorded acoustic version (featuring singer Andy Allo) for release within 24 hours of her death.

"I mean, you don't get Prince [covering] your song for no reason," he says. "We lost a great lyrical voice, a great talent. Someone who was able to flawlessly explain how they felt in a song. And those things last.

"Just as Amy was inspired by people who passed away before her birth," Remi concludes, "she will inspire people who were born after she was gone."

Remi on Amy: "We lost a great lyrical voice."

Avalon.red

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

STANDING IN THE DOORWAY
Laura Nyro
VID CROSBY
DAVIS
DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS
private space
STAND FOR MYSELF

CONTENTS

78 ALBUMS
- All signs point to the return of Durand Jones & The Indications
- Chrissie Hynde pays tribute to Bob Dylan
- David Crosby's purple patch continues
- King of the hill country blues: Cedric Burnside
- Treasure seekers Modest Mouse
- Plus, Lump, Lukas Nelson, Yola, Paul McCartney, The Wallflowers, Tony Allen, Sufjan Stevens, Joan Armatrading and more.

92 REISSUES
- Laura Nyro gets an extensive archival overhaul
- How Mudhoney saved Sub Pop and charted higher than *Nevermind*
- Ian Carr's the star
- The White Stripes' vinyl demos cache
- The indescribable Annette Peacock
- Plus, Alice Cooper, David Bowie, Miles Davis, Noel Gallagher, Belgian prog jazz and more.

100 HOW TO BUY
- Super Furry Animals: psychedelic pop thrills.

103 SCREEN
- Biggie & Tupac: the sequel, the legend of Sam Cooke, designated driver Dave Grohl and more.

104 BOOKS
- Will Sergeant: the Bunnymen founder tells his story. Plus, pop genius in the '80s, Buzzcocks by song, Dylan, Nico, Miss Mercy and more.

INDEX

Allen, Tony **97**
Amarante, Rodrigo **83**
Armatrading, Joan **83**
Barber, Chris **97**
Birds Of Maya **88**
Bowie, David **98**
Branch, Jaimie **85**
Breathless **95**
Burnside, Cedric **86**
Cain, Chris **88**
Carr's Nucleus, Ian **97**
Changüí **87**
Coloursound **84**
Cooley, Mike, Hood, Patterson & Isbell, Jason **89**
Cooper, Alice **94**
Crosby, David **81**
Davis, Miles **98**
Dear, Matthew **95**
Elfman, Danny **86**
Flatlanders, The **87**
Fretwell, Stephen **84**
Frye, Rob **85**
Fuzzy Lights **89**
Gallagher, Noel **98**
Gillespie, Bobby & Beth, Jehnny **80**
Go! Team, The **81**
Goon Sax, The **80**
Harvey, P.J. **99**
Hiatus Kaiyote **88**
Hiss Golden Messenger **81**
Hynde, Chrissie **82**
Hypnotic Brass Ensemble **88**
Irvine, Andy **99**
Jones, Durand & The Indications **78**
Keuning **86**
King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard **80**
Kings Of Convenience **86**
Lanterns On The Lake **95**
Lipstick Killers, The **98**
Lump **83**
Mack, Lonnie **94**
Maridalen **85**
Martin, Kevin Richard **81**
McCartney, Paul **83**
Merseybeats, The **94**
Mistreater **95**
Modest Mouse **80**
Motörhead **98**
Mountain Goats, The **88**
Mudhoney **95**
Murlocs, The **81**
Murry, John **84**
Museum Of Love **85**
Mvula, Laura **83**
Nelson, Lukas & Promise Of The Real **84**
Nyro, Laura **92**
Peacock, Annette **96**
Piroshka **87**
Portico Quartet **85**
Prescott, Adam & Conscious, Dougie **87**
Real Tuesday Weld, The **84**
Ribot, Marc **85**
Roberts, Alasdair **88**
Satomimagae **89**
Scientists, The **80**
Seafoam Green **88**
Snapped Ankles **89**
Sorrows, The **94**
Squirrel Flower **86**
Stevens, Sufjan **84**
Tabane, Philip **94**
Tucker, Rosie **83**
UB40 **87**
U-Roy **87**
VA: JCR Records Story Volume Two **97**
VA: Hurdy Gurdy Songs **99**
VA: Studio One Roots **98**
VA: Alligator Records **94**
VA: Gary Crowley's Lost '80s Vol. 2 **94**
VA: Progressive Jazz In Belgium **97**
VA: Tribute To Roky Erickson **89**
Wallflowers, The **84**
White Stripes, The **98**
Williamson Brothers **89**
Yola **83**

> "Miss Pamela loved sex and rock'n'roll, while Miss Mercy loved drugs."
>
> **SYLVIE SIMMONS GETS TO THE HEART OF THE GTO'S. BOOKS P105**

Signs of the times

Feted Indiana soul revivalists embrace the dancefloor and survey a nation in crisis on timeless, irresistible third album. By **Stevie Chick**. Illustration by **Panik**.

Durand Jones & The Indications

★★★★

Private Space

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS
private space

> "Subtle messages are woven into the fabric of the balladry."

IF THE PAST is indeed a foreign country, then Durand Jones & The Indications are such regular visitors that they no longer have to show their passports at immigration. Certainly, they've spent long enough there to have adopted the local customs and to be able to pass themselves off as natives.

Forming almost a decade ago while students at Jacobs School Of Music in Bloomington, Indiana, Jones and his bandmates were united by a love for classic soul and R&B. Theirs was no casual, passing fancy. Their two previous albums, 2016's self-titled debut and 2019's *American Love Call*, reveal a painstaking ear for the vernacular and technique of the soul music of half-a-century ago. This ability is in part down to their uncanny approximation of era-appropriate arrangements and production methods, achieving a level of verisimilitude that places them in the lineage of soul revivalists stretching back from Sharon Jones and the Daptone movement, to Amy Winehouse's *Back To Black* (the commercial apex and acme of this sound), and beyond. So eerie is their feel for period detail, these albums conjured images of Lee Mavers of The La's' quixotic (and possibly apocryphal) search for studio gear thick with "authentic '60s dust".

But Jones and his Indications' gift goes deeper than mere technique and technical wizardry. Their songwriting is supple, natural, never audibly reaching for a vibe it can't achieve; their loving approach ensures their tunes never feel like pastiches of old styles. And their two main vocalists span enough of a spectrum that their harmonies are able to conjure the sound of classic vocal groups like The Stylistics and The Delfonics, Jones's deeper, warmer, stronger tones playing off drummer Aaron Frazer's higher-register, gossamer-light vocals.

Their third album suggests they are aware that this backwards focus might soon have become a cul-de-sac. The group have responded by embracing more contemporary influences – but only relatively. Over the page, Jones cites disco and "bedroom R&B" as *Private Space*'s key sonic reference points, and the album depicts the Indications shaking loose the bonds of 1974 to enter the headily futuristic realm that was 1977. But only a churl would grumble over the unabashedly retro nature of music as sweetly satisfying and as soulfully nourishing as this. The Indications apply their characteristic ear for detail to the disco era on Witchoo, a shout-out to the Chicano low-rider community that was the first to support them. The track seduces with the interplay between Jones and Frazer, the four-square thump of the bass drum and the rasp of the hi-hat, and an ambience that feels more dancefloor than recording studio, the background whoops, hollers and handclaps evoking the infectious party of Marvin Gaye's Got To Give It Up. The Indications do disco as well as they did Philly soul.

Disco isn't the only mode on *Private Space*, however. The title track recalls the heavy, downcast vibe of Curtis Mayfield circa Right On For The Darkness, its epic strings billowing like brooding storm clouds, while Ride Or Die is another lighter-than-air Stylistics-style devotional, peaking as it breaks down to just drums, ghostly Hammond organ purr and Frazer's sweet, vulnerable falsetto. And while the group's gift for ersatz sounds is keenly accurate, the songs are never hamstrung by reverence for historical accuracy. Rather, they work fresh magic from these vintage tics and flourishes, with the effect that their tunes sound numinously familiar, like unexpected, unread chapters within a beloved and well-thumbed book. This knack is best displayed on More Than Ever, which weaves together some choice elements – the staccato horn fusillades of Curtis's Give Me Your Love, a bass line conversant with Baby This Love That I Have by Minnie Riperton, and an ecstatic third-act key change recalling Donny Hathaway's Love, Love, Love – into an irresistible confection all its own that is perhaps the Indications' finest song yet. This is very much "grown folk's music".

But while Jones and the Indications take such abundant pleasure in robing themselves in the sonic garb of yesteryear, *Private Space* is very much an album about Where We're At in 2021. The openly political content might be sparing but suggests more subtle and implicit messages woven into the fabric of their balladry. Opener Love Will Work It Out is the sole track to make these issues explicit, with its nightmarish vision of Jones wandering like Jimmy Ruffin across a land "overtaken by disease" and reeling at "modern day lynchings in the streets I call home". Inspired by the scale of the pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, this imagery is startling, purposefully unsettling, and haunts the songs that follow, inviting interpretation of their lyrics as further (albeit veiled) social commentary. The languid, beautiful Southern soul of Reach Out could be an offer of support to a beleaguered lover, but "Like a willow, you're bending but you'll never break" feels like a broader declaration of solidarity with the civil rights struggle. And in context of the disorienting sense of isolation wreaked by the pandemic, the title track's dreamlike consummation of lust assumes a deeper and more profound meaning, especially when Frazer sings yearningly of being "planets apart" but still "making our escape/For a moment of ecstasy."

Ultimately, *Private Space*'s message is one of hope, as spelt out by the tracks that bookend it. The closing I Can See finds the group addressing a "young world" with skies "turned to grey", but with a faith that "The darkness of night/Gives way to new light." And Love Will Work It Out might bear the wounds of the bleak reality of blackness in 21st century America, but it finds redemption in the messages of gospel, in believing "joy will set us free". That opening track finds Jones reflecting on his mission to sing "some songs to heal some souls" – a lofty ambition, perhaps, but one this resonant and deeply pleasurable album achieves with grace and groove.

Courtesy Big Crown Records

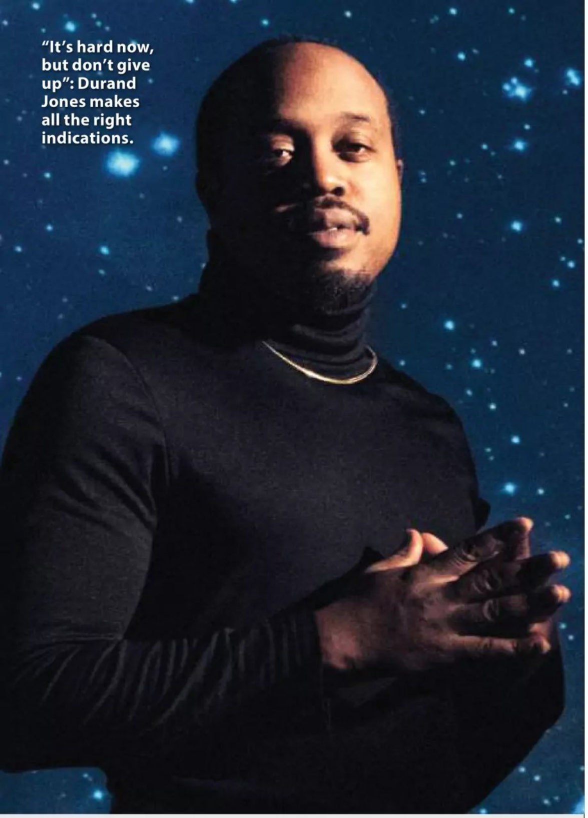
BACK STORY: SUNNY SIDE UP

● *Private Space* was preceded this spring by a new version of the group's early B-side Cruisin' To The Park, re-recorded with Mexican-American group Y La Bamba to salute the Indications' early adopters in the Chicano low-rider community. "When we started touring back in 2017, on the West Coast the Chicano folks would come out in droves to see us, pulling up out front of the venues in their low-rider cars," says Jones. "The first time I realised how much soul meant to the Chicano community, we were playing this tune called Should I Take You Home by ['60s Chicano soul singer] Sunny Ozuna and the Sunliners [pictured], and the whole crowd started singing along. They respected and embraced us for doing that song and giving props to Sunny Ozuna. When the kind of soul music we play had gone underground, the Chicano community kept it together, they were our first supporters. For that I will always feel thankful and blessed."

JONES SPEAKS! DURAND ON RACIAL PREJUDICE, THE WORLD, AND GRANDMA'S LESSONS.

DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS

PRIVATE SPACE



“It’s hard now, but don’t give up”: Durand Jones makes all the right indications.

“I want my music to heal people.”

Durand Jones speaks to **Stevie Chick**.

What was your aim for *Private Space*?

“To expand our horizons and establish a sound that felt timeless, rather than retro. The band’s communal Spotify playlist, ‘Indications Inspirations’, used to feature Little Anthony And The Imperials, Sam Cooke, The Shirelles – vocal groups and sweet soul stuff. But while we were working on *Private Space*, it was all disco, ‘bedroom R&B’ and cats doing really cool stuff today. We wanted to discover new things about ourselves.”

Is the song-title Private Space an allusion to lockdown?

“It’s one of a handful of songs we began in late 2019, and it was about being with someone in a crowded place but seeing only them in the room and, like, *really* wanting to get them out of there so you can get it on. And then, in January, the pandemic happened, and it took on a completely different meaning – this thing everyone could relate to, being home alone and within our private space. It just felt like the perfect title for the album, and I love all the effects on Aaron’s voice at the end. It almost feels like some psychedelic tiki/jungle shit, and I’m *all* about it. (*Laughs*)”

The line in Love Will Work It Out about “modern-day lynchings in the streets” is incredibly powerful. What inspired it?

“George Floyd was a black man in Minneapolis who was arrested for allegedly passing counterfeit money, and a police officer kneeled on his neck for over eight minutes and killed him. And that happened right after Breonna Taylor was killed in her bedroom by police. I felt, ‘Fuck this – I don’t want to write a song, I don’t want to talk on social media, I can’t do anything but breathe right now. I need to keep my soul and my sanity intact.’ How much more do we have to take? How many more people have to die by the hands of police for us to truly receive justice? This shit is just exhausting. I took a step back from everything. I knew that the universe would make the call when it was time for me to make art again. Fast forward to last November, and I got that call. I wrote this poem, about everything that happened in 2020, and that’s where the song came from.”

The message of the song is ultimately positive, however…

“That comes from my grandmother, who raised me and really believed in what Dr [Martin Luther] King stood for. She’s long gone now, but after George Floyd died, and I was feeling despair and doubt, I’d think about things that she would say. And that song is the sort of thing she would tell me, like, ‘It’s hard right now, but don’t give up.’ I miss her every day. I feel like she’s still here with me, and she lives on through a song like that. People ask me if I want to be a star. But I just want my music to heal people, man, to recharge and rejuvenate their spirits.”

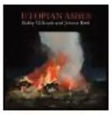
Bobby Gillespie And Jehnny Beth

★★★★

Utopian Ashes

SONY. CD/DL/LP

Scream Team meets Savages in a deep-soul marital-tension epic.



Over a quarter-century since Primal Scream chased Southern soul perfection on *Give Out But Don’t Give Up*, their core membership here return to that noble quest, abandoning synths and shapeshifting for ‘proper’ songwriting, strings and emotional honesty. The duet format with Jehnny Beth, who plays embittered wife to Bobby Gillespie’s morally bankrupt hubbie in a loose narrative of decline, works with an immediacy that possibly hasn’t blessed the Scream’s every collaboration. Heartbroken balladry, however, was always their strongest suit (think I’m Losing More Than I’ll Ever Have, the gem that Andrew Weatherall turned into Loaded), and *Utopian Ashes* is comfortably their best record since the early ’00s, with guitarist Andrew Innes and pianist Martin Duffy each playing superbly, and, on pained standouts such as Remember We Were Lovers and Living A Lie, Gillespie’s lyrics plumbing depths of degradation that feel both real and deeply shocking. It’s not easy listening, but profoundly engaging and redemptive.

Andrew Perry

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

★★★★

Butterfly 3000

KGLW. CD/DL/LP

Melbourne psychedelic gonks embrace synths.

Market forces dictate that if you make 18 albums in nine years, those records better be different from each other, or returns will inevitably diminish. To their credit, Stu McKenzie’s crew have kept things moving; on 2019’s *Infest The Rats’ Nest*, for instance, branching off from core psych-rock into apocalyptic metal. After recent double-whammy *KG* and *LW* furthered the music-theoretical quest of 2017’s *Flying Microtonal Banana*, this latest outing intrepidly ditches said six-string ‘fruit’ for modular synthesizers. Given McKenzie’s high, wispy voicing, the obvious reference is Tame Impala, but the motorik pulse propelling opener Yours flags their own Krautrocky bedrock, while Shanghai’s tootling up-and-down melodies, which somehow evoke both Yellow Magic Orchestra grandeur and Go-Kart Mozart banality, above all transmit King Gizzard kookiness. Further in, breezily integrated acoustics trigger Steely Dan white funk (Interior People) and their own whimsy circa 2015’s *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon* (Black Hot Soup). All coalesces, near-inexplicably, as yet another excellent album.

Andrew Perry

The Goon Sax

★★★

Mirror II

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

Third album from Brisbane trio goes through the looking glass.

“We take on so many forms,” sings Louis Forster on In The Stone, a line that hints at the unsettled, unfixed nature of The Goon Sax’s first album since 2018’s *We’re Not Talking*. With a pleasing lack of ingratiation, the all-singing trio – Riley Jones, James Harrison and Forster (son of Robert) – aren’t too worried whether those forms neatly obey the laws of geometry. Early Orange Juice and early Go-Betweens are both present in the terse but sensitive indie of In The Stone or The Chance, Desire channels House Of Love vibrations (and Jones’s Hope Sandoval slur) but there’s a waywardness to Temples or Caterpillars, as if they’re trying to catch Dave Fridmann production grandeur on a Fall budget. It’s like watching people chuck matches into a box of fireworks: sparks everywhere, but – excitingly, frustratingly – you’re never sure where they’re going to land.

Victoria Segal

Modest Mouse

★★★★

The Golden Casket

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP/MC

Tightly woven set is the first in six years for indie rock stalwarts.

Isaac Brock is anxious as anyone about our always-on digital world. “Peeping Toms at every window, dangling a leash for your throat,” he observes with his trademark infectious melancholy on Never Fuck A Spider On The Fly. On Japanese Tree, he demands, “When can we leave?” Brock – with original drummer Jeremiah Green, producer D. Sardy and the line-up from *Strangers to Ourselves* (2015) layering dense sheets of percussion, keyboards and guitar – tries to understand where to go, and whether he’s already there. A quarter of the songs mention “figuring it out”. Yet it often sounds as if Brock actually has. As he ultimately assesses on We’re Lucky: “These are the stars and these are the seas, these are the places that we’re lucky just to be between.” Life is a casket. And it’s golden. Both are true. Brock apparently has figured it out.

Chris Nelson

The Scientists

★★★★

Negativity

IN THE RED. CD/DL/LP

Aussie swamp-punk icons test positive for classic noise and attack.

It’s as if they never left. “Love me for my innocence/ My cognitive dissonance,” founding singer-guitarist Kim Salmon growls through gnarled riffing and barbed-fuzz bass as Outsider opens The Scientists’ first studio album in more than three decades. Salmon has reunited the world-beating line-up with guitarist Tony Thewlis and bassist Boris Sujdovic that peaked on 1986’s *Weird Love*, and their unique gift for sounding at once thoroughly unhinged and ferociously in control is intact: the crippled-R&B bridge disrupts the drum-circle pulse of Make It Go Away; the angular swing in The Science Of Suave; the peals of steel guitar and gulping-Duane Eddy twang running through Moth-Eaten Velvet, a spectral-ballad surprise. Negativity closes with familiar turbulence – the Creedence-via-Can of Outerspace Boogie – and a trick ending, with extra rhythm-section march, that suggests Salmon wants to keep this band and party going for a while.

David Fricke

Bobby Gillespie and Jehnny Beth play Burton and Taylor.

Sam Christmas, Ebru Yildiz

Sweet and high

Crosby's miraculous second act continues. By **David Fricke**.

David Crosby

★★★★

For Free

BMG. CD/DL/LP

David Crosby: he still has stories to tell.

THERE MAY be no better measure of the long miles David Crosby has travelled in excess and survival than his reading on this album of Joni Mitchell's title song. Originally on her 1970 LP *Ladies Of The Canyon*, For Free has been in Crosby's live repertoire for nearly as long. A 1977 concert performance on *Allies*, a lacklustre 1983 album with Crosby, Stills and Nash, betrays its time: Crosby on the verge of his dark ages, shattering Mitchell's crystalline waltz with exaggerated bravura. Here, Crosby delivers the revelation in that passing moment with a street musician – the distance between pure art and mere celebrity – as a pilgrim come home, in a warm, humbled tone with guest singer Sarah Jarosz and elegant, restrained piano played by Crosby's son and producer, James Raymond.

The eternal miracle of music – as profound inspiration and renewing salvation – has been a running theme in Crosby's stunning second act as a solo artist: *For Free* is his fifth studio album in a decade, a productivity he never attained with CSN (or Y). Given the dire past that follows him in the form of fragile health and estrangement from those bandmates, it is no surprise that frustration and delight come on alternating tides. "They don't tell you when you arrive/All the things you need to stay alive," Crosby rues in I Think I, a mix of clouds and modal jazz buoyancy that turns to relief when he hears "people singing in the rain/I start walking towards that sound again." Secret Dancer opens with the cold, harsh quiet of incarceration – an all-too-familiar memory for the singer – and a grim suggestion of torture: "That night when they finished/The humans went and locked the door/And walked away the way humans do." But the defiance comes right away ("In the stillness… A time to write and sing"), echoing the music's seesaw of shadows and light.

Helpful friends on the album include the Doobie Brothers' Michael McDonald (backing vocals in River Rise) and Steely Dan's Donald Fagen (who co-wrote Rodriguez For A Night). The Other Side Of Midnight, a beguiling reprise of Crosby's psychedelic stargazing in CSN's Wooden Ships and on the 1971 solo marvel *If I Could Only Remember My Name*, was actually written by Raymond – the apple has not fallen far from the tree. But it is Crosby's stubbornly enduring voice – the will to live and create in that gift after he came so close to throwing it away – that binds the wonder and mission on *For Free*. In Shot At Me, Crosby recalls a coffee shop exchange with a soldier just back from the Middle East who advises him on how to stay alive under fire: "You've got to find your lifeline and/Pick up your thread and/Tell your story before you're dead." Crosby may be on the road to sunset, but he's still got work to do.

Anna Webber

Hiss Golden Messenger

★★★★

Quietly Blowing It

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

Prolific North Carolina folk-rocker makes the political personal, with wit and soul.

MC Taylor's reference for the 12th Hiss Golden Messenger album was *There's A Riot Goin' On*, penned as civil rights protests raged but reflecting those traumas obliquely. Couched in arrangements evoking the lyrical charisma of the E Street Band and the easy funk of The Band, *Quietly Blowing It* sounds little like Sly's bleak opus, but similarly engages a parallel societal crisis with powerful subtlety. The stinging Mighty Dollar aside (key lyric: "The poor man loses/The rich man wins"), Taylor measures the damages sustained and ruminates on paths towards redemption, asking "What is forgiveness? What is atonement?" on resonant opener Way Back In The Way Back. His answers might seem simple – "You've got to let someone in/That's all that will save you" he reasons, on the title track – but Taylor's balm-like burr delivers a blissful moment of healing.

Stevie Chick

The Go! Team

★★★

Get Up Sequences Part One

SNOWBALL. CD/DL/LP

Shiny happy collective's relentlessly upbeat sixth LP.

As blueprinted on their 2004 breakthrough *Thunder, Lightning, Strike*, Brighton collective The Go! Team construct unfailingly upbeat sets of cut and paste samples, live instrumentation and playground melodies that sit somewhere between The Avalanches and De La Soul. Accordingly, sixth album *Get Up Sequences Part One* is a brightly coloured whirligig of clattering breakbeats, chipper flute motifs and hyperactive guest spots. It throws up its fair share of sunshiny treats: the freewheeling Freedom Now captures the spirit of '90s big-beat, while closer World Remember Me Now possesses a chorus so sweet it should probably come with an E-numbers warning. Consumed in one sitting, though, the relentlessly Day-Glo vibes can get a little sickly, with tracks such as Cookie Scene's Sesame Street-variety hip-hop in danger of bringing out listeners' inner Oscar The Grouch.

Chris Catchpole

Kevin Richard Martin

★★★★

Return To Solaris

PHANTOM LIMB. DL/LP

The Bug re-soundtracks the Soviet answer to 2001.

A director whose musical admirers include Ryuichi Sakamoto, Patti Smith, Squarepusher and many more, Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 film Solaris is one of world cinema's megaliths. A profound and mystical examination of love and suffering set above a psychic ocean-world, it was re-scored by The Bug/King Midas Sound brain Kevin Martin for last year's Videodroom event at Ghent's Film Fest. Distinct from the sacral mysteries of Eduard Artemyev's Bach-imbued OST, the recorded version is a trip into the whispering, vaporous unknown. Over 10 tracks of grainy electronic drift, tension and poignancy, psychologist Kris Kelvin's (spoiler alert) hopeless entanglement with an alien simulacrum of his dead wife – almost sultrily so on Together Again – is evoked with creeping dread. Alone in an unknowable universe, the beatless dub-nebula of Wife Or Mother accentuates the Freudian horror. Could also be used as an emetic for the slicker 2002 George Clooney remake.

Ian Harrison

The Murlocs

★★★★

Bittersweet Demons

ATO. CD/DL/LP

Glittering powerpop from King Gizzard associates.

Though two-fifths of The Murlocs ply their trade as part of über-prolific psych rock outliers King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard, the Melbourne band operate within far neater lines. Their fifth album is sparkling powerpop of a classic vintage. Frontman Ambrose Kenny-Smith's theatrical flourishes bring to mind Sparks' Russell Mael, while his blasts of harmonica skirt the band's skinny tied ship round the earthier Canvey Island mudbanks of Dr. Feelgood. Indeed, it's difficult to listen to too much of *Bittersweet Demons* without imagining the group flouncing about on a re-run of Top Of The Pops or The Old Grey Whistle Test, but the crackling energy and embarrassment of melodic riches bursting from each song here makes for a persistently joyous listen.

Chris Catchpole

Shining light into lockdown gloom: Chrissie Hynde, took her time.

Stuck inside with mobile

An album of Dylan covers recorded in lockdown, on the phone.
By **Sylvie Simmons**.

Chrissie Hynde

★★★★

Standing In The Doorway: Chrissie Hynde Sings Bob Dylan

BMG. CD/DL/LP

CHRISSIE HYNDE has never been shy about singing other people's songs. Over the years she's snuck all sorts of covers into setlists or onto albums. Not to mention her previous solo album, *Valve Bone Woe*, which was all covers, from Charles Mingus to Barbra Streisand to Nick Drake. Now, two years later, comes another covers album, only this time they're songs by just one artist: Dylan.

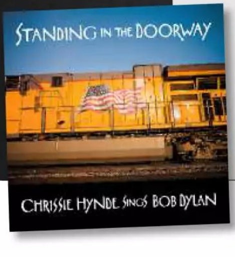
Like *Valve Bone Woe* – which came about after Hynde found a lost mixtape she'd made years earlier of favourite songs and decided to record them herself – *Standing In The Doorway* is something of a lucky accident. But where *Valve...* was made in the studio, with about 50 musicians, *Standing* was recorded at home, by text, with just one other person, Pretenders bandmate James Walbourne.

Last year, Hynde and Walbourne were deep in the gloom of their separate lockdowns when deliverance came in the form of the new Bob Dylan single, Murder Most Foul. When Elvis Costello first heard that song, it brought him to tears. Nick Cave found it overwhelmingly comforting. When Hynde heard it, "It changed everything for me", she says. "Lifted me out of this morose mood." She called Walbourne and said, "Let's just do some Dylan covers," and they did, nine of them, though not Murder Most Foul.

There are songs here from *Shot Of Love*, *Blood On The Tracks*, *Time Out Of Mind*, *Infidels*, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Greatest Hits Vol II* and *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*. One of them would suggest a song; Hynde would write the words on an iPad, sing it into her iPhone and send it to Walbourne, who'd put it on his laptop. He'd then add various instruments – piano, keyboards and guitar mostly, though Hynde plays the rhythm guitar tracks – and send it back, and so on, until the next song.

Some of the vocals sound like first takes, which gives them an honesty (maybe a bit too honest on opening track In The Summertime). But from here on, it's just lovely. You're A Big Girl Now is slow and languorous, full of feeling. There's an almost Waitsian tenderness to Sweetheart Like You. Blind Willie McTell, as much torch song as blues, is ultra-slow, with gentle piano, harmonium, mandolins and electric guitar. Tomorrow Is A Long Time is all the more heartbreaking for its stoicism. Love Minus Zero is a pretty faithful folkie cover, with a dash of steel guitar and birdsong at the end. But the standout is the title track. A 7:14-minute epic, part piano ballad, part hymn, it starts slow and tender then ebbs and swells, with a hypnotic, dreamy instrumental. Tchad Blake (Black Keys, U2) mixed, and makes it sound almost symphonic.

Thinking about it, had Hynde made a covers album of an artist she admires as much as Dylan in a studio with a band and an orchestra, it might have been a much less relaxed experience. The unhurried, intimate approach helps make this such a good listen. Beautiful.



LAURA MVULA

Laura Mvula

★★★★

Pink Noise

ATLANTIC. CD/DL/LP

Third album from Mercury Prize nominee channels SOS Band with synth pop.

Born in 1986, Laura Mvula jokes, "I came out of the womb wearing shoulder pads." Moving away from the lush neo-soul and gospel-delia of her first two albums, on *Pink Noise* Mvula pays homage to the '80s, starting with a much more stripped-down, percussive synth sound. Tracks like Church Girl and Conditional are deliberately unrelaxed, using post-disco electro to symbolise the constriction of heartache and lockdown. But her 1980s are not just located in austere bass loops – in the dramatic, dreamy orchestration of Magical, the shifting keys of What Matters (featuring Simon Neil of Biffy Clyro), and the revelatory feel of Before The Dawn, there's the glorious sophisti-pop of bands such as Blue Nile and Prefab Sprout. Here her vocals are less hemmed in by the muscular electro-funk she's created. Mvula is a gifted arranger with a distinctive *cri de coeur*, and this is where she soars.

Lucy O'Brien

Rosie Tucker

★★★

Sucker Supreme

EPITAPH. CD/DL/LP

Punchy third album from Los Angeles singer-songwriter.

"Time is a trash compactor," sings Rosie Tucker, and if that's true, *Sucker Supreme* is at the crunching-down-on-the '90s stage in its cycle, a record that follows Phoebe Bridgers and Soccer Mommy in their repurposing of post-grunge indie. Habanero and the audaciously named Barbara Ann nod back to Juliana Hatfield; Dog has an air of Kim Deal insouciance and if you were told Different Animals had been released on DC indie Simple Machines around 1993, it wouldn't be unbelievable. (Pitching forward a decade, there's also a cover of Jeffrey Lewis's Arrow). The songs are energised by Tucker's funny, smart and often poignant dissections of change, family history, anger and desire, amphibious creatures as likely to spark a lyric as agribusiness. It might spend a lot of time looking back, but *Sucker Supreme* feels as if its eye is very much on the moment, too.

Victoria Segal

Rodrigo Amarante

★★★★

Drama

POLYVINYL. CD/DL/LP

Brazilian stadium-filler returns with a tale of love and deception.

Filled with meta-textual observations, Amarante's second solo album is a delight of many layers, a story with a beginning, middle and end. He meets a dance partner and falls in love, but soon finds their fancy footwork disguises deceit. At times, the singer seems intimately involved, at others to be commentating from a distance, or perhaps these events take place on a stage – is he subject, actor, creator or critic? Lyrically, then, *Drama* is deeply involving, but fans of Amarante's earlier careers in rock bands and samba big bands will find much to delight them here: bossa nova (authentically Brazilian, yet imported wholesale from the US), tango, John Barry-like themes, Muscle Shoals-style funk. The author claims to be trying to run away from Brazil's musical riches here, yet the result adds to them, a sublime blend of melancholy and desire.

David Hutcheon

Paul McCartney

★★★★

McCartney III Imagined

UNIVERSAL. CD/DL/LP

More than a remix album: Macca offers up his self-titled third to reinterpretation.

If it took decades before 1970's *McCartney* and 1980's *McCartney II* were fully appreciated – the former pre-echoing the handmade lo-fi of the '90s; the latter yielding hipster dancefloor cuts in the '00s – then the process has been accelerated after last year's *McCartney III*. The remit here is an open one: some artists, such as Beck and Khruangbin with their art-funk overhauls of Find My Way and Pretty Boys respectively, build traditional, if inventive remixes around Macca's vocals. Others go further and basically cover the songs – Phoebe Bridgers' atmospheric take on Seize The Day or Dominic Fike's avant-pop approach to The Kiss Of Venus, both underline the melodic strengths of the originals. Best, perhaps, is Anderson.Paak's warping of the pastoral folk of When Winter Comes into warm, Stevie Wonder-ish synthy soul.

Tom Doyle

McCARTNEY
III IMAGINED

Yola
STAND FOR MYSELF

Yola

★★★★

Stand For Myself

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Bristol singer widens her musical horizons with eclectic second album.

On the three albums she made fronting the obscure British country-soul group Phantom Limb back in the 2000s, it was glaringly obvious that Yolanda Quartey had a special talent deserving of wider recognition. Reinventing herself as Yola after the band split, in 2019 she grabbed four Grammy nominations for her country-tinged debut LP, the Dan Auerbach-helmed *Walk Through Fire*. Auerbach stays on board for *Stand By Myself* but allows his protégée more creative freedom; there's still a strong Nashville influence but there is a pop-rock sensibility at play too, which gives the music a widescreen sweep. Yola's caressing vocals are sublime throughout on a dozen well-crafted songs that range from chugging country rock (Diamond Studded Shoes) to dreamy '70s pop-soul (Dancing Away In Tears) and anthemic, pining ballads (Like A Photograph). An enthralling step on her musical voyage.

Charles Waring

Joan Armatrading

★★★★

Consequences

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Pioneering singer-songwriter's 20th long-player in nearly 50 years.

Few have trod a more singular path than Joan Armatrading. A revered stateswoman today, she was a voice in the wilderness in the '70s, whose trailblazing for serious female singer-songwriters still passes almost unacknowledged. Deep of voice, emotion and intent, she was always more grown up than her peers. Bending to neither fashion nor time, she's still honing her craft and almost anything here could fit on almost any Armatrading LP. Lyrically she's still falling in love ("Do you know, you're amazing?" she coos on highlight Already There), but the slow burn of *Consequences* reveals more nuance with each sitting. Natural Rhythm is all finger-clicking energy (think Me Myself I, but aimed at someone else), while Glorious Madness is powered by Kate Bush-style piano, and passive-aggressive title notwithstanding, To Anyone Who Will Listen is vintage Armatrading insecurity.

John Aizlewood

Lump

★★★★

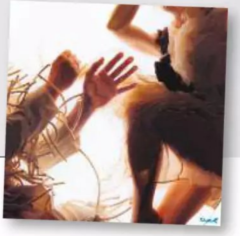
Animal

CHRYSALIS/PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

Curious meeting of minds' second musical hybrid.

NEWLY DISCOVERED creatures tend to lurk at the unassuming end of the miracle-of-life spectrum: barnacles, moths, lungfish. *Animal*, the striking second collaboration between Laura Marling and Tunng's Mike Lindsay – is a more dramatic fusion of musical DNA, a synthetic cryptid apparently hothoused under some sinister green light. There are modular Moogs and clarinet, post-punk chill and horror-film creep; Phantom Limb smears Lambchop and Young Marble Giants on the same slide; Paradise sounds like a girl-group made up of John Carpenters. It's an evolution that particularly suits Marling, giving her words and voice a lab-coated coolness, opaque yet urgent lyrics – "We have some work to do," for example – delivered with high seriousness. There's a slight hollowness in its bones, a coldness under its skin, and the experimental splices are sometimes a bit too obvious, but *Animal* admirably slips standard musical taxonomy to take on a life of its own.

Victoria Segal



Dramatic fusion of musical DNA: Lump's Laura Marling and Mike Lindsay.

Steph Wilson

anachronistic fare, an impression deepened by a deadpan cover of Lady Gaga's Poker Face.

David Sheppard

Time to reflect: Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real mull it over.

Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real

★★★★

A Few Stars Apart

FANTASY. CD/DL/LP

Seventh album from Willie's acclaimed sixth-born.

LUKAS NELSON & PROMISE OF THE REAL
A FEW STARS APART

A DECADE and a bit after their self-titled debut, Nelson found himself – like almost everyone – stuck at home. A shock, though, for someone who's spent his life on the road, touring with his dad and his band, which has also moonlighted as John Fogerty's and Neil Young's road bands. Lockdown gave him time to reflect, he said, and this album – recorded live to 8-track tape at Nashville's famed RCA Studio A – is reflective, lyrically and musically. A lot of slow/slow-ish songs. Opener We'll Be Alright – where Lukas's balladeer vocal most resembles Willie – and lovely sway-along closer Smile are late-night beauties, almost *Stardust*-esque. But there's swagger too: first single Perennial Bloom, which starts out folky before the band rocks in; and upbeat shuffle Hand Me A Light, with its bar-room piano, backporch bass and classic country lyrics.

Sylvie Simmons

Sufjan Stevens

★★★

Convocations

ASTHMATIC KITTY. CD/DL/LP

Sufjan and grief reconnect on 150-minute, five-disc electronic requiem.

Carrie And Lowell, in 2017, was Stevens' intimate song-cycle tribute to his late mother. His father died in 2020, inspiring *Convocations*, which takes a very different form: 49 electronic instrumentals split into five sections – Meditations, Lamentations, Revelations, Celebrations and Incantations. Despite Stevens' committed Christian beliefs, *Convocations* is anything but churchy or new age-y, siding more with the raw, rhythmic and even disruptive energies of systems music pioneers like Morton Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros and Terry Riley. Lamentation III could be the Radiophonic Workshop; Revelation II's choral samples suggest a simultaneously ecstatic and unsettling after-world, a potential equivalent of heaven and hell; Revelation III's spectral calm is the exception not the rule. Grief takes many forms, but *Convocations* – conceived in lockdown and isolation – represents anguish and discombobulation, without having yet reached acceptance.

Martin Aston

The Wallflowers

★★★★

Exit Wounds

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Jakob Dylan and co's first LP in almost a decade.

Its title a metaphor for the previous relationship baggage we port around, *Exit Wounds* is a rootsy, intricately arranged, classy-sounding album with 'come hither' song titles (Wrong End Of The Spear; The Dive Bar In My Heart). The lineage is perhaps more Traveling Wilburys than Dad this time out, the George Harrison-esque motifs on Roots And Wings and easy, Tom Petty-ish swing of I Hear The Ocean (When I Wanna Hear Trains) a delight. With the Jackson, Alabama-raised Shelby Lynne a smouldering Southern soul presence across four songs and Jakob Dylan, now 51, phrasing these literate backward glances with new gravitas, *Exit Wounds* is a welcome return for the man last seen duetting with Beck, Cat Power et al on 2018's Laurel Canyon doc, Echo In The Canyon. It's his best original work by some yards.

James McNair

Coloursøund

★★★

Coloursøund II

INGROOVES. CD/DL/LP

The Cult's Billy Duffy and The Alarm's Mike Peters, back together again.

Forged "out of wedlock", as Mike Peters describes it, Coloursøund's raucous 1999 debut was made after he'd left The Alarm and while Billy Duffy was on a four-year hiatus from The Cult. Only now, after inevitable further sorties with the acts that made them, have the pair dusted down their histrionics for *Coloursøund II*, an unreconstructed hard-rock record that's often gutsier than a butcher's slop bucket. Though the objects and affiliations of Peters' zeal remain fairly obtuse, the headlong flight of Paradise (Free People) stirs the blood, and on Lightning Strike, too, Peters' voice sounds like it could crunch rocks. Duffy, meanwhile – still many folks' idea of a guitar god in Platonic form – knows all the little tricks and licks that excite, and when to go Neanderthal (see Actions). Though the odd battle against cliché is lost, *Coloursøund II* wins the war.

James McNair

John Murry

★★★★

The Stars Are God's Bullet Holes

SUBMARINE CAT. CD/DL/LP

Third solo album from troubled American émigré.

Mississippi-born John Murry's debut, *The Graceless Age*, dealt with his near-fatal drug addiction, and its 2017 follow-up, *A Short History Of Decay*, followed his subsequent broken marriage. His third, however, begins to turn towards the light as Murry's life has become more stable, even if 'stable' seems a relative term. Resident in Ireland for five years, Murry has found acceptance of himself, if not peace, and while disturbance and violence still pepper his songs there's also a bleak humour. Oscar Wilde (Came Here To Make Fun Of You) examines the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the title track opens with the line, "Of course I'd die for you", and even a pitch-black cover of Duran Duran's Ordinary World is still about Simon Le Bon's shopping angst. Murry's scorched-earth life may not have become a bed of roses, but at last some daisies are pushing through.

Andy Fyfe

Stephen Fretwell

★★★★

Busy Guy

SPEEDY WUNDERGROUND. CD/DL/LP

First LP in 14 years by 'lost' Noughties singer-songwriter.

One-time drinking buddy of Elbow's Guy Garvey, in the mid-2000s Stephen Fretwell broke ground that subsequent singer-songwriters parlayed into far greater success, despite his song Run playing over Gavin & Stacey's end credits. Fretwell's relative lack of sales after *Magpie* (2004) and *Man On The Roof* (2007) was followed by years of disillusionment taken up with washing pots at Wetherspoons, re-doing his A-levels, childcare and a failed marriage. For the ironically titled *Busy Guy*, Fretwell and his guitar were recorded in just two hours, with minimal backing added later, capturing his bad life choices, regrets and hopes at their most immediate. From the tiniest relationship detail to our greater place in the cosmos, the singer asks life's big and small questions with grace and grandeur. *Busy Guy* gives Fretwell a magnificent second chance, and a richly deserved one.

Andy Fyfe

The Real Tuesday Weld

★★★

Blood

ANTIQUE BEAT. DL/LP

First of three swansong albums from louche London troubadour and friends.

The plaything of singer-producer Stephen Coates, The Real Tuesday Weld have been delivering their self-styled 'cabaret noir' – marrying old jazz 78s to modern electronics and wry, boho-demimonde lyrics – for over two decades. Now Coates is calling time on the project with a trilogy of valedictory LPs. Pitched in the middle of an outré Venn diagram of Serge Gainsbourg, Momus and Barry Adamson, the first of the trio, *Blood* deals in cinematic archness, with Coates and three female guest vocalists sharing its semi-spoken narratives of after-hours nefariousness and elegant disaffection. At its best – the film noir-meets-Weimar oompah of What Happens Next?; Skeletons In Waiting's gypsy jazz existentialism; the pulsing, male suitor-scorning Promises Promises delivered by Sephine Llo – this is knowing, eloquent if musically

Allyse Gafkjen

Jaimie Branch

★★★★

Fly Or Die Live

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Trumpeter/vocalist takes her inspirational fight to Zurich.

It's hard to overestimate the power of recent albums on Chicago's International Anthem label. This new set by Branch operates in a similar world to those by Angel Bat Dawid and Damon Locks: one where jazz, politics, and a multitude of other influences collide in a way that's sometimes raging, sometimes ecstatic, and often a potent mixture of both. A 19-tracker recorded in January 2020, Branch's latest draws on the repertoire of 2017's *Fly Or Die* and 2019's *Fly Or Die II* and adds dazzling new dimensions. The quartet line-up is odd – trumpet, cello, double bass, percussion – but it proves spectacularly flexible, as Branch leads them through hollering blues, temple gamelan spaces and most points in between. At times she can resemble Miles at his most abstracted and delicate, at others a punk gleefully seizing the possibilities of free jazz. It makes for an exhilarating ride: try Prayer For Amerikkka for most of that range, and righteous energy, encapsulated in 14 minutes.

John Mulvey

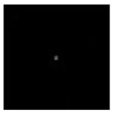
Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog

★★★★

Hope

NORTHERN SPY. CD/DL/LP

Celebrated Tom Waits foil explores political and cultural burnout.



Described by Ribot as "more depressing than Mahler's Kindertotenlieder", opener B-Flat Ontology laments and lambasts this world's ever-accumulating mass of aspirant rock stars, poets, post-modern philosophers and performance artists ("this one fucked his mother on YouTube"). An eloquent, blackly comic, seemingly Beat prose-influenced curmudgeonliness is key on *Hope*, but it also deals in elastic Blaxploitation funk (Bertha The Cool), distressed beats, sax freak-outs (They Met In The Middle), and the kind of knee-jerk non-conformism that can make people dismissive of almost *everything* (The Activist). Masterfully played, cool and deliciously spiky in tone, it sometimes reminds this writer of mid-'90s alternative act Soul Coughing, but perhaps only Ribot, bassist Shahzad Ismaily and drummer Ches Smith would dare hatch a 10-minute version of Donovan's Wear Your Love Like Heaven drained of all whimsy.

James McNair

Museum Of Love

★★★★

Life Of Mammals

SKINT. DL/LP

LCD Soundsystem offshoot up the drama over infectious no-wave grooves.

Given the fact that James Murphy re-formed LCD Soundsystem in 2016, it's perhaps unsurprising that it's taken their drummer Pat Mahoney, also the vocalist here, seven years to follow up the eponymous debut album he made in cahoots with DFA artist Jee Day (real name: Dennis McNany). Murphy mixed *Life Of Mammals*, resulting in added punch to the persistent beats, along with unmistakable echoes of his day-band. Mahoney's melodically edgy voice meanwhile sits somewhere between the swooping drama of Scott Walker and the yearning soul of Orange Juice-era Edwyn Collins. Artful arrangements take their time here: analogue electronic pulsing backdrops two saxophones duelling to disorientating effect in Your Nails Have Grown, while Hotel At Home sounds like something that might have rumbled through New York's Danceteria circa 1982.

Tom Doyle

Museum Of Love: Pat Mahoney and Dennis McNany go deep.

Portico Quartet

★★★★

Terrain

GONDWANA. CD/DL/LP

Londoners' re-route, drawing on ambience and minimalism.

An act continuously refining their craft, the three slowly unfolding pieces of Portico Quartet's sixth album find them conspicuously shifting away from their jazz roots into a more abstract conversational zone. Each movement pivoted around a short, repeated motif, that vanishes and reappears. I takes Duncan Bellamy's hang-drum pattern and bathes it in waves of warm, shimmering synthetics as Jack Wyllie's treated, sometimes bird-like sax circles mellifluously above. Piano is at the heart of the niftier, *au naturel* II, low cello drones underlying Wyllie's inquisitive impressionistic figures, returning later thicker and heavier, before hope springs eternal as he arcs and dives over III's rich percussive tapestry. Retaining the spooky cinematics that are Portico's stock-in-trade, *Terrain*'s meld of Midori Takada and Sun Ra teases and tricks its way to mantric embrace.

Andy Cowan

Rob Frye

★★★★

Exoplanet

ASTRAL SPIRITS. DL/LP

Jazz/ambient fusionist from Chicago's away with the birds.

To a select cabal of kosmische fans, Rob Frye is the woodwind player in Chicago's Bitchin Bajas, often adding a little jazz friction to their Terry Riley-adjacent synthscapes. In another life, however, Frye is a field biologist, transcribing birdsong and, eventually, making music out of it. You can hear a couple such tunes on this terrific solo LP, as XC175020 and XC222182 reveal an affinity between Amazonian wrens and, it seems, Sun Ra (check the original tweets at www.xeno-canto.org). With the help of various bandmates and auspicious jazzers such as Ben Lamar Gay, Frye builds on the possibilities of Bajas' 2017 Sun Ra cover, Angels And Demons At Play, seesawing elegantly between synth ritual, minimalist fugue state, percussion workout and spiritual jazz. Lightship Sgr A Star, in particular, shows how well the fusion plays out: swinging, otherworldly, at once kinetic and beatific.

John Mulvey

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN

Maridalen

★★★★

Maridalen

JAZZLAND. CD/DL/LP

Norwegian trio's minimalist, beat-less debut; an album with few precedents.

RECORDED IN a picturesque wooden church near the old stone ruins of St Margaretakirken, Maridalen's debut speaks powerfully of its scenic surroundings. Field recordings of rushing water and birdsong detail the opening Koral, its spare harmony given texture by Anders Hefre's intimately breathy baritone sax. The similarly sedate Blir Det Regn I Dag, Tru? allows Jonas Kilmork Vemøy's trumpet to lead us on a yearning journey through their surrounds, while Inga and Vals Fra Bjølsen – both jaunty waltzes by Maridalen's stately standards – are held down by Andreas Rødland Haga's sasquatch double bass stomp. At once modern and sepia-toned, *Maridalen* is an immersive low-end dreamworld that distils distant Nordic jazz variants (Nils Petter Molvær, Bernt Rosengren, Lars Gullin) into a singular vision. It acts like a powerful sedative, washing blues away.

ALSO RELEASED

Dahveed Behroozi

★★★★

Echos

SUNNYSIDE. CD/DL

There's a palpable tension to Behroozi's dark and brooding first studio outing, as serpentine bassist Thomas Morgan and resourceful drummer Billy Mintz interpret the Californian's Steinway sketches on the fly: epitomised by two wildly contrasting takes on Chimes, TDB's spare melancholy or Royal Star's slowly enveloping lament. A melting amalgam of Keith Jarrett, Vijay Iyer and Maurizio Pollini, where abstractions change with the wind.

John Carroll Kirby

★★★★

Septet

STONES THROW. CD/DL/LP

Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters* is an obvious touchstone for John Carroll Kirby's second LP, an expansive, summery jazz-funk crossover that lives and dies on its monster grooves. While the Solange and Frank Ocean keyboardist's loose, winding synth solos rarely falter, cosmic epic Nucleo and the skittering, Morricone-edged Sensing Not Seeing show real breadth of ambition, adding the pizzazz its predecessor *My Garden* lacked.

Amaro Freitas

★★★★

Sankofa

FAROUT. CD/LP

Recorded over two years, with few breaks, the rhapsodic *Sankofa* fully nails Brazilian Freitas's elaborate compositional style. The Monkish hard-edged vamps and stuttering groove of Ayeye are superseded by pulsing standouts Cazumbá and Malakoff, where the motorik repetition of Freitas's off-the-scale looping patterns threaten to spin into abstraction over the driving carnival rhythms of long-time compadres Jean Elton and Hugo Medeiros.

Emma-Jean Thackray

★★★★

Yellow

MOVEMENTT. CD/DL/LP

A Yorkshire jazz prodigy who learnt trumpet in a brass band, but also sings, makes beats and DJs, Thackray crams a lot into the 14 tracks of her cerebral yet deeply groovy debut. Be it the spiritually questing Mercury, funk-stomper Venus or the title track's happy-clappy love-in, *Yellow* scatterguns through P-Funk, Alice Coltrane, gospel, Sun-Ra, electric-era Miles Davis and '70s jazz-fusion with glee. *AC*

Cedric Burnside: building on a solid blues foundation.

Mississippi rising

Next generation Hill Country blues, with an economical groove and a soft centre. By **Andrew Perry**.

Cedric Burnside

★★★★

I Be Trying

SINGLE LOCK. CD/DL/DL

Readers hooked on last month's Black Keys-compiled MOJO CD *Hill Country Blues* will be pleased to hear the Nashville-based duo aren't the only people keeping alive this specific strain of music from North Mississippi. Cedric Burnside debuted as his grandfather R.L. Burnside's live drummer aged just 13, soon pounding the skins on R.L.'s wild, mid-'90s international tours opening for post-hardcore revivalists Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. Now 42, Cedric is the foremost, twice Grammy-nominated ambassador for a style of blues whose trance-inducing, metre-flouting otherness opposes contemporary pop's computerised grid systems.

Following collaborative and Cedric Burnside Project outings, his stand-alone debut, 2018's *Benton County Relic*, introduced his own lean, sinewy take on the Hill Country idiom. Now, on *I Be Trying*, it's even more tightly coiled, its motivational and cautionary messages immediate and often terrifying, its roots as ancient as the rolling landscape around his native Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Here, Burnside gathers further scions of the region's greater musical dynasties: most of the recording took place at Memphis' Royal Studios, birthplace of Hi Records classics by Al Green and Ann Peebles, with Lawrence 'Boo' Mitchell, son of Hi production genius Willie and present-day custodian of Royal. On the record's two most explosive tracks, Luther Dickinson, son of Memphis legend Jim, adds electrifying slide guitar, his bottleneck intensifying Step In's cry for salvation.

Burnside busts out intricate picking throughout, and robust beats on six of the 13 tracks, but largely avoids instrumental showboating, in favour of a stark, funky economy where every twang and thump serves the song's forward motion. Only those blasts of slide, the odd lick of cello, bass and backing singing (from his youngest daughter, Portrika), intrude.

On first listen, this reductive clarity, and a fierce lyrical directness, disarms. Cedric's craftsmanship is revealed cumulatively, and addictively, thereafter.

The two bluesiest cuts, Hands Off That Girl and the scary Bird Without A Feather, where his Hendrix-y tenor drops to a John Lee Hooker moan, are covers of Junior Kimbrough and Grandpa R.L. respectively. Otherwise, Cedric's songwriting is best described as extrapolating from the blues, building on their foundation to his own ends. While often espousing their downtrodden worldview (see acoustic-plucking opener The World Can Be So Cold), his is a 21st century perspective, on the title track preaching self-betterment, and in romantic tunes like You Really Love Me and Love You Forever, revealing a vulnerability that would've repulsed a 1930s practitioner like Skip James.

But to contemporary sensibilities, Burnside presents as a genuine one-off – a uniquely rooted artist of rare precision and power.

Danny Elfman

★★★

Big Mess

ANTI-/EPITAPH. CD/DL

Prolific Grammy and Emmy-grabbing composer makes first solo album in 37 years.

Though he's scored for movie directors from Tim Burton to Ang Lee, veteran Angelino Danny Elfman is perhaps best known as creator of The Simpsons' theme tune. *Big Mess* certainly has elements of anarchic satire too, its metal guitars, busy, fortissimo strings and industrial textures underpinning a politicised and darkly comic fury as he rages against Trump's legacy (Choose Your Side) and compromised ardour (Love In The Time Of Covid). There's a pleasing, Bowie-ish swagger to Elfman's vocals and a steam-punk thrust to *Big Mess*'s heavy, junkyard percussion, the album's caustic, chaotic arrangements utterly fearless throughout 18 rather exhausting songs. The absurdist speed-metal of Kick Me – "Kick me! I'm a celebrity" – is the two-minute standout, while Insects, a reworking of a song by Elfman's avant-garde '80s outfit Oingo Boingo, packs astonishing punk punch belying his 68 years.

James McNair

Keuning

★★★

A Mild Case Of Everything

PRETTY FAITHFUL. CD/DL/LP

Killers founder and guitarist's second solo long-player.

Frustrated by the relentless touring and by his songs being rejected, Dave Keuning took a break from The Killers in 2017. He returned this year with a solo career up and running. 2019's low-key *Prismism* was a careful start, but he has expanded his palette on this album which predominantly comprises songs spurned by The Killers, although for the most part it's hard to glean exactly why. There are more guitars than were used on *Prismism* and if Don't Poke The Bear, Bad Instincts and especially World's On Fire deploy The Killers' driving swirl, the earthiness those guitars bring to What Do Ya Want From Me and the lolloping Hangman On The Ocean separate him from the mothership. Yet, while he has created his own identity and You Can Stay is almost a madrigal, he does struggle to craft the massive anthems which define the band he founded. Perhaps that's what he intended all along.

John Aizlewood

Kings Of Convenience

★★★

Peace Or Love

EMI. CD/DL/LP

Softly spoken Norwegian duo back with first LP in 12 years.

Released in the UK on the same day as The Strokes' first EP The Modern Age, Kings Of Convenience's 2001 debut album *Quiet Is The New Loud* stood firm amid the oncoming NYC rush-hour, Bergen's own Simon And Garfunkel starting their own unassuming acoustic movement. The slyly titled *Peace Or Love* is Erlend Øye and Eirik Glambek Bøe's first album since 2009's *Declaration Of Dependence*, but their gift for hand-turned melancholy hasn't blunted with time: Catholic Country and Rumours are locket-sized short stories, while the wistfulness of Fever and Angel is measured to the last millimetre. There are moments when you can almost hear the gurgle of a coffee machine in the background, but *Peace Or Love* is sophisticated without being easy, a quiet storm all of its own.

Victoria Segal

Squirrel Flower

★★★

Planet (i)

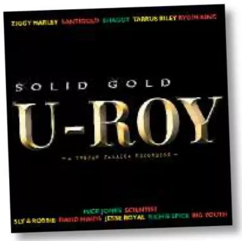
FULL TIME HOBBY. CD/DL/LP

Ella O'Connor Williams' second album, named for an imaginary new world.

Keen to shake things up after home recording during Covid-19 isolation, former gender, women's and sexuality studies student Ella Williams swapped Arlington, Massachusetts, for Bristol, Avon, to record *Planet (i)* with P.J. Harvey engineer and Gruff Rhys producer Ali Chant. Like its 2020 predecessor, *I Was Born Swimming*, *Planet (i)* (a fictitious world people settle on after fleeing Earth, apparently) is an intense, slightly avant churn from an artist who has called herself Squirrel Flower since infancy. Her upfront, glacial vocals nod to Lana Del Rey, but her backdrops are scuzzier, be it in the Belly-esque guitar squall of Hurt A Fly or the moment in Night when crunching drums take an indie strum to another plane entirely. Portishead's Adrian Utley adds further layers to Williams' complexity, and if she lacks overt hooks, she's an expert on atmosphere and texture.

John Aizlewood

Abraham Rowe


ZIGGY MARLEY SANTIGOLD SHAGGY TARRUS RILEY RYGIN KING
SOLID GOLD
U-ROY
MICK JONES SCIENTIST
SLY & ROBBIE DAVID HINDS JESSE ROYAL RICHIE SPICE BIG YOUTH

U-Roy

★★★★

Solid Gold U-Roy

TROJAN JAMAICA. CD/DL/LP

The pioneer's full-throttle posthumous swansong.

Crowned 'The Originator' in the early 1970s for introducing a fluid toasting style that transformed Jamaican popular music, U-Roy maintained stellar status in the decades to follow, until longstanding health issues took their toll last February. His final album project, *Solid Gold U-Roy* emphasises his lasting legacy by allowing him to revisit nuggets from his back catalogue, duetting with a range of notable guests. Among the many high points, an upbeat take of Man Next Door with Santigold and a playful Tom Drunk with Tarrus Riley bridge old and new, and the thunderous remake of Every Knee Shall Bow is an epic pairing with Big Youth (and Mick Jones somewhere in the mix), complemented by a spacey Scientist dub. U-Roy remains on form throughout, delivering everything in his relaxed yet confident style, all testament to his enduring talent.

David Katz.

The Flatlanders

★★★★

Treasure Of Love

RACK'EM/THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Butch Hancock, Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Joe Ely's outlaw country supergroup returns.

It's been 12 years since The Flatlanders' last new album – not counting 2012's *Odessa Tapes* whose songs were recorded in 1972, the year the band began. According to Joe Ely, whenever they'd make a start on a follow-up, their solo careers would get in the way until the pandemic forced them off the road. The distressed, well-thumbed album sleeve, picturing three horsemen silhouetted against a Sun Records logo sunset, makes *Treasure* look even more vintage than *Odessa*. Sounds a bit that way too. Of the 15 new recordings, very few are new originals. Most are new versions of classic country or Americana songs they've covered live over the years. The musicianship's great, Lloyd Maines' production's gorgeous and there's a slew of highlights, ranging from an upbeat rockabilly take on The Mississippi Sheiks' Sittin' On Top Of The World to the stoic Townes Van Zandt cover Snowin' On Raton.

Sylvie Simmons

Piroshka

★★★★

Love Drips & Gathers

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Indie supergroup's reflective yet spirited second album.

The title *Love Drips & Gathers* is taken from a Dylan Thomas poem pondering the natural energies inherent in humankind. Fittingly and doubtless intentionally, the members of Piroshka have an abundance of past energies to draw from. Miki Berenyi was in Lush, Mick Conroy in Modern English, K.J. McKillop in Moose and Justin Welch in Elastica. Their second album together is more cohesive and less Britpop than 2018's *Brickbat*. More trenchant too. The nine tracks focus on experiences and relationships. V.O. is Berenyi's shimmering tribute to 4AD designer Vaughan Oliver, who died in 2019. Scratching At The Lid is a shoegazing/powerpop stormer with contrastingly biting lyrics from McKillop contemplating the loss of his father. The sense of coming to terms with pasts is heard in the music too: Echo Loco suggests latter-day Lush shorn of the Britpop moves. In all, a bracing experience.

Kieron Tyler

Adam Prescott Meets Dougie Conscious

★★★

The Dub Session

BACKATIVE. LP

Atmospheric technodub collaboration.

Reggae Roast co-founder Adam Prescott has been producing music since 2009 and when lockdown put the brakes on sound system gigs, he teamed up with veteran producer Dougie Conscious for a series of limited edition dubplates. That led to this engaging album, alternating fresh studio creations with new dub mixes of some of Prescott's better singles, produced with the likes of Earl Sixteen and Michael Prophet. Everything has been rendered with attention to detail and the mix of computer technology and live organic instruments works well, songs such as Meditate On Dub and The Message Dub giving space for the music to breathe, unlike the sledgehammer-to-nut effect that has ruined many UK steppers' releases. Pressed on heavyweight vinyl that allows for added audio clarity, this is a sleeper release that takes time to absorb, sounding better after a few close listens.

David Katz

UB40

★★★

Bigga Baggariddim

SHOESTRING. CD/DL

Intergenerational duets with guests from Tippa Irie to BLVK H3RO and Leno Banton.

This is the Robin/Duncan Campbell line-up of UB40, which sounds slightly tougher than Ali Campbell's version but still retains the group's pop core. The record's title references *Baggariddim*, UB40's 1985 album of collaborations which yielded the Number 1 I Got You Babe with Chrissie Hynde. Here they return to that format, taking the rhythms and backing tracks from their 2019 *For The Many* and reconfiguring them as duets. Pablo Rider and Slinger, who both appeared on the original album, bring grit and substance with the rootsy Did You See That? and the deejay rhyme of Mi Life Action, respectively. Winston Francis and Inner Circle provide a gentler lovers touch, the former with the horn-drenched My Best Friend's Girl, the latter with the bouncy Rebel Love.

Lois Wilson

BLVK H3RO bigga's up UB40 *Baggariddim*.

WORLD

BY DAVID HUTCHEON

CHANGÜÍ
THE SOUND OF GUANTÁNAMO

Various

★★★★

Changüí – The Sound Of Guantánamo

PETALUMA. CD

The sound of ungentrified old Cuba, direct from the fields and village squares.

IT'S LIKE finding 50 rough, discarded demos for the *Buena Vista Social Club*: recorded *in situ* in the rural parts of the eastern province of Cuba, where back-breaking labour is interrupted by impromptu parties that last all weekend, this 3-CD box set, curated by journalist Gianluca Tramontana, is arguably the first in-depth survey of the folk music that gave birth to a revolution. You can feel the heat, the dust and the rum, but the real magic comes from the tres (the Cuban guitar, strung in three pairs, with a distinctive metallic twang) and percussion, the sort of lightning that needs to be captured as it happens, where it happens. The uninhibited performances are a joy throughout, while the cross-pollination with African styles that would, in their turn, be influenced by the Caribbean gives you something upon which to ruminate.

ALSO RELEASED

Angrusori

★★★

Live At Tou

HUDSON. CD/DL/LP

Recorded live in Stavangar, this pushes the gypsy jazz of the Slovakian Roma into the avant-garde, with musical accompaniment by Norwegian experimentalists Kitchen Orchestra. The repertoire is recognisably Roma, as are most of the vocals, but the backing veers from deeply sympathetic to outright confrontational. Naturally, it ends in a wild hoedown that makes you wish you'd been there.

Dal:um

★★★★

Similar & Different

TAK:TIL. CD/DL

The latest culture exports from South Korea, Hwang Hyeyoung (geomungo) and Ha Suyean (gayageum) – both instruments are 5ft wooden zithers – have been playing traditional music since childhood, but here unite to pursue an uncharted journey into space. If you like Sunday morning albums with a lot of silence then virtuoso flourishes on gorgeous melodies (solo Toumani Diabaté, say), this is for you.

Angélique Kidjo

★★★

Mother Nature

VERVE. CD/DL/LP

Having paid tribute to Celia Cruz and Talking Heads in her previous albums, Angélique Kidjo has now moved into modernist mode by teaming up during lockdown with a younger generation of Africans, the biggest names in Afrobeats and contemporary African pop, including Burna Boy, Sampa The Great and Yemi Alade. It's still recognisably Kidjo, yet feels like a genuine attempt to reconnect with her contemporary homeland.

Okuté

★★★★

Okuté

CHULO. CD/DL/LP

Debut for a rumba collective mining a deep seam of Cuban traditions, plus the melodies and rhythms that arrived in the dock during Havana's heyday as a global trading nation. The thump of skin on drum delivers the power, but it's their own idiosyncrasies that make it special – the distorted tres, bowed double bass or stab of organ. Heavy santería vibes. *DH*

Alasdair Roberts Og Völvur

★★★★

The Old Fabled River

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Ethereal Scottish troubadour entwines with Nordic collective.

Originally convened to accompany Roberts in concert, Völvur is the brainchild of Oslo-based Hans Kjorstad, whose dextrous fiddle weaves around woodwinds, bowed guitar, percussion and electronics to fashion courtly, occasionally wraithlike Scandi-Celtic chamber-folk arrangements. The ensemble's name references an apocalyptic Old Norse text – Völuspá, The Prophecy Of The Seeresses – but rather than dramatic intimations of Ragnarök, *The Old Fabled River* deals only in wistful enchantment, with four, typically bardic, otherworldly Roberts originals augmented by traditional ballads and a brace of Norwegian hymnals, achingly emoted by saxophonist Marthe Lea. Opener Hymn Of Welcome sets the tone, a delicately-spun instrumental preamble ushering in Roberts' reedy rumination on mortality and new beginnings, his vertiginous vocal melody wreathed in a fjord mist of clarinets and violins, while the traditional revenant ballad Sweet William's Ghost, like much else here, is a paradigm of restrained, spectral poignancy.

David Sheppard

Chris Cain

★★★★

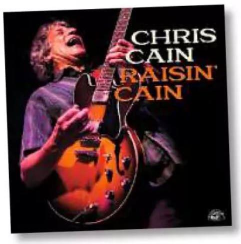
Raisin' Cain

ALLIGATOR. CD/DL

Blues singer and guitarist Cain capitalises on four decades' hard work

A sturdy pillar of West Coast blues society, a dues-paid guitarist descended from B. B. and Albert King, Chris Cain has been making admirable records since 1987 but somehow failing to win a lot of attention. Signing with Alligator may change all that. Well-crafted original songs like Hush Money, Too Many Problems, I Believe I Got Off Cheap and I Don't Know Exactly What's Wrong With My Baby deploy familiar blues subject-matter – depression, distraction, the avarice and infidelity of lovers – but Cain's ways of handling it are always distinctive, the idiosyncratic lyrics intricately woven with the sharply coloured threads of the guitar lines, the matured-in-oak voice perfectly balanced against the surging funk of the arrangements. In *Raisin' Cain*, this long-serving bluesman is definitively raising his game.

Tony Russell



Seafoam Green

★★★★

Martin's Garden

MELLOWTONE. CD/DL/LP

Duo's second well-connected album of gospel-soul-blues.

As proven by their 2016 debut *Topanga Mansion*, country blues and Southern soul are Seafoam Green's wheelhouse. In spite of the raw deep groove they make, the duo of Dave O'Grady and Muireann McDermott Long hail not from some Missouri backwater but Dublin, and are now based in Liverpool. With Tedeschi Trucks Band's Tyler Greenwell sitting in on the drummer's stool and also occupying the producer's chair, they're more than the real deal as they slide and boogie their way through *Martin's Garden*. If you need more confirmation of their 'chops', that debut album was produced by The Black Crowes' Rich Robinson. What sets Seafoam Green apart from mere bar band, however, is the easy blending of those Irish roots into their swing, no more obviously than on a scorching version of Brendan Behan's The Auld Triangle, pitching O'Grady's nicotine growl against McDermott Long's holler on a near faultless album.

Andy Fyfe

BIRDS OF MAYA
VALDEZ

Birds Of Maya

★★★★

Valdez

DRAG CITY. DL/LP

Philadelphia's psych-psychos kick out the jams, belatedly.

For those of us who believe Iggy never bettered *Fun House*, the occasional appearance of a band like Birds Of Maya is manna from heaven. It evidently takes time to sound as brutally gonzoid as the trio do on their fourth album (and first made in an actual studio), recorded in 2014 but only just surfacing now. In the interim, guitarist Mike Polizze has concentrated more on his Purling Hiss and solo projects, and a marginally sweeter, more accessible take on this kind of overdriven garage rock. There's no such respite here, though, thanks to magnificently unsanitised ramalams in the shape of Please Come In and BFIOU, the latter beginning very roughly like an MC5 take on Silver Machine. Stick around, too, for the full frenzied 11 minutes of Recessinater, psychedelia re-enacted with the sort of hardcore speed and cacophonic thuggery that's been thin on the ground since the hey-day of Comets On Fire.

John Mulvey

Hypnotic Brass Ensemble

★★★

This Is A Mindfulness Drill

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP/MC

Reimagining Richard Youngs' *Sapphie* to celebrate Jagjaguwar's 25th birthday.

Richard Youngs' doomed, desolate fifth solo LP is a long way from the busking New York and Chicago streets pounded by Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, sons of Sun Ra trumpeter and astral jazz pioneer Phil Cohran. Their sympathetic take on the Glaswegian avant-gardist's highly personal 2000 LP is a swooning, swelling marvel that puts guest singers front and centre. While Moses Sumney's dazzling falsetto doesn't need to work as hard as Youngs' to hit the highs, his solitude is palpable in the ascending motifs of Soon It Will Be Fire, a trick only half realised on baroque-pop bard Perfume Genius's contribution. Sharon Van Etten's plaintive soul-baring on snail's-pace closer The Graze Of Days steals it. More sigh than song, it raises goosebumps, like the original.

Andy Cowan

The Mountain Goats

★★★★

Dark In Here

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

Further wry and beauteous songs about the last year.

A third collection from prolific frontman John Darnielle since Covid reared its head, this was completed at Muscle Shoals by late March 2020. It's another strong set – polished, jauntily sinister, with a running theme of calamity. Folky, upbeat Parisian Enclave features "rats returning home to our nests" with "spores in our lungs". The Destruction Of The Kola Superdeep Borehole Tower, the LP's passionate rock-out moment, considers Russia's effort to drill through the Earth's crust, its location the "entrance to hell". Dappled, hazy Mobile is a spin on the guilt in Melville's Moby-Dick, made honeyed by electric piano from Spooner Oldham and Will McFarlane's chiming Telecaster. Some tracks could be Scott Walker haikus, their melodies lulling, their words apprehensive. Brainy, jazzy, prescient.

Glyn Brown

Tre Koch

Hiatus Kaiyote

★★★★

Mood Valiant

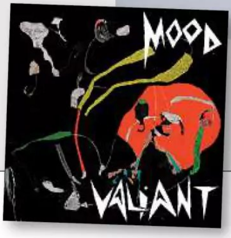
BRAINFEEDER. CD/DL/LP

Melbourne future soulsters' unpredictable shape-shifting hits new heights.

HIATUS KAIYOTE'S third LP had a tricky genesis – work ceased abruptly in 2018 as singer Nai Palm underwent a life-saving cancer surgery. Her subsequent rude health spools through the squiggling synths and lyrical obfuscations of Chivalry Is Not Dead, the sweeping pianos and dappled jazz bass of Get Sun (with horns and strings from Brazilian arranger Arthur Verocai), songs that underline their talent for conjuring mesmerising grooves where funk, soul, disco and prog combine. Palm is the star, though, her byzantine harmonies the crucial glue as pitches shift and time signatures skip, before they strip their craft right back on woozy standouts Red Room and Stone Or Lavender. Vibrant and uninhibited, dotted with rule-bending twists, *Mood Valiant* is the sound of summer.

Andy Cowan

Hiatus Kaiyote: vibrant and uninhibited.



Fuzzy Lights

★★★★

Burials

MEADOWS. CD/DL/LP

Cambridge Krautfolk collective's first album in eight years.

After 2013's *Rule Of Twelfths* and a stint backing Damo Suzuki, Fuzzy Lights seemed to have abandoned their quest to merge hardcore Can-style gallops with surprisingly delicate folk. In fact, the quintet led by married couple Rachel and Xavier Watkins were scheming an almighty leap forwards. When the bleak, 10 minutes of Songbird rattles into a fierce, climactic concluding maelstrom and segues into the gentle beauty of The Graveyard Song (concerning the passing of time from a yew tree's point of view), it's the ultimate Fuzzy Lights moment. There's real darkness here: Under The Waves and Sirens ("Still I see them buried/Faces pale beneath the ground") are as death-fixated as Ian Curtis, while The Maiden's Call deals with Rachel's miscarriage. In the end, the musical battle between the fuzzy and the light makes Fuzzy Lights special.

John Aizlewood

Mike Cooley, Patterson Hood & Jason Isbell

★★★

Live At The Shoals Theatre

THIRTY TIGERS. LP

Four albums, three past and present Drive-By Truckers, one show.

By 2014, the scars from Jason Isbell's unamicable 2007 departure from Drive-By Truckers had healed. When their mutual friend, actor Terry Pace, needed help paying medical bills after a stroke, Isbell and DBT founders Hood and Cooley played this acoustic, in-the-round, one-off benefit in Florence, Alabama. The stripped-down format is a mixed blessing. There's no room for the Truckers' country soul aspect and the layering which makes them much more than a bar band. Alternatively, without musical clutter, the material has new room to breathe, and when the trio harmonise sparingly on Heathens and guitars gently clash on Eyes Like Glue, they soar. Better still, story songs such as Carl Perkins' Cadillac (Sun's Sam Phillips 'gave' him one after Blue Suede Shoes but deducted it from Perkins' royalties) have new clarity and fresh poignancy.

John Aizlewood

Various

★★★★

May The Circle Remain Unbroken: A Tribute To Roky Erickson

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

Late Texan garage-psych godhead covered by friends, fans, spiritual successors.

Tribute albums are often scuppered by the reverence contributors feel towards the source material – especially when the subject is as revered as Roky Erickson. Longtime friend Billy F Gibbons's (I've Got) Levitation is faithful right down to the ululating jug sounds, adding little beyond Gibbons's pleasingly gruff vocals. The more radical reimaginings fare better, like Alison Mosshart and Charlie Sexton redressing Starry Eyes as a reverb-drenched '50s ballad, or The Black Angels recasting Don't Fall Down as a lo-fi Velvets lullaby, or Chelsea Wolfe delivering If You Have Ghosts as yearning, widescreen piano-ballad. The covers favour Erickson's more introspective solo works over his garage-y nuggets, though Ty Segall's needles-in-the-red Night Of The Vampire impressively out-weirds the original, preserving its pin-eyed sense of panic. Meanwhile, Lucinda Williams clearly relishes her every berserk snarl on You're Gonna Miss Me – and her glee is infectious.

Stevie Chick

Snapped Ankles: the righteous rabble rousers.

Laura Lewis, Mitsuhide Ishigamori

Snapped Ankles

★★★★

Forest Of Your Problems

THE LEAF LABEL. CD/DL/LP

Eccentric, rabble-rousing groovers with a serious message.

Snapped Ankles are East London's post-punk shamans of the motorik groove, who clad themselves in verdant ghillie suits that suggest ancient woodland spirits on-stage. As with 2019's *Stunning Luxury*, the deleterious effects of capitalism remain a target on their third album. But their scope has expanded, resulting in this riotous takedown of eco-hypocrisy and corporate greenwashing to the accompaniment of rhythms so wildly exuberant they could rearrange loins. Psithurhythm is an explosion in a tom-tom factory with a bass line to match. At times, like the military march-meets-glam techno of Rhythm Is Our Business, frontman Austin's barked utterances have a MES-ian quality. On other occasions – the tumultuous Teutonic throb of Xylophobia – the punky, abrasive disco that Andrew Weatherall cooked up with The Asphodells is a reference point.

Stephen Worthy

Williamson Brothers

★★★

Williamson Brothers

DIAL BACK SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Punk'd-up political Southern rock from Alabama.

As the fresh-faced rhythm section from Birmingham, AL firebrands Lee Bains III & The Glory Fires, Adam (bass) and Blake (drums) Williamson have had a hand in plenty of broadsides against pervasive attitudes in their native Yellowhammer state. On this breakaway debut, the siblings take The Glory Fire's Replacements-y brink-of-catastrophe ramalama to precarious straits. Their lurching melodic skills instantly register on powerpop opener Take Back Summer, while Pressure's On marries blue-collar worry with clanging riffs and falling-down-the-stairs rhythm to pulse-racing effect. The gentler I Hate It Here avoids polemical earnestness with a country-tinged litany of Birmingham-centric beefs delivered in an amusingly dozy stoner drawl. Produced by Drive-By Truckers' bassist Matt Patton, *Williamson Brothers* feels steeped in Southern alt-lore, charged by the rage of Southern disenfranchisement, but with humour and kicks that sweetens the listening experience.

Andrew Perry

UNDERGROUND

BY ANDREW MALE

Satomimagae
Hanazono

Satomimagae

★★★★

Hanazono

RVNG INTL. CD/DL/LP

A garden where we feel secure, flowering in urban Tokyo.

PART OF Tokyo's long-standing acid-folk scene, Satomimagae has been writing music since 2003, but only recording for the past decade. Although her sound betrays certain debts to Japanese 'new music' of the early '70s, releases such as 2014's *Koko* and 2017's *Kemri* were less about nostalgia than ghosts, the guileless 'beautiful young generation' sound filtered through age, history, sadness and decay. *Hanazano*, which translates as "flower garden", feels somewhat different. The ghosts are still there, but Satomimagae's landscapes now feel more secure, empathetic, and hypnotic, conjuring up sounds akin to the spectral northwestern folk sound of Liz Harris's Grouper or Jesy Fortino's Tiny Vipers. A first listen might be all about surfaces and textures but repeated plays reveal hidden depths. As a clincher, a portion of the proceeds from this album go to Sesame Workshop, the non-profit, educational organisation behind Sesame Street.

ALSO RELEASED

United Bible Studies

★★★★

Divining Movements/ West Kennet Ascension

BANDCAMP/PARIAH CHILD. CD/DL/MC

The conclusion of the trilogy that began with the epic *Cave Hill Ascension* in 2019. *Divining Movements* finds the protean British/Irish folk collective creating vast meditative swells of saxophone drones and wordless vocals as if Jon Hassell's Fourth World were moving beyond the veil, while *West Kennet Association* is desolate pastoralist folk hymnals that could summon the dead. Powerful stuff.

Ayako Ogawa

★★★

Sanatorium

OFF/BANDCAMP. DL

A voice and piano improviser, Ogawa lost her husband last year and here performs a series of "cheerful-sad" works at home with percussionist and guitarist: vocal patterns that move between grief and play into hushed poems about becoming a bird, songs of chaos and delight about moving forward, whatever the circumstance.

Rip Hayman

★★★★

Waves: Real And Imagined

RECITAL. DL/LP

Two long-form minimalist works from this 70-year-old sailor/artist/editor/musician. The first uses woodwind to recreate the soundscapes of a sea journey (foghorn cries, the dizzying flights of birds, air blowing through the sails). For the second, recorded out on the mighty Pacific Ocean, the ship becomes the instrument, emulating synth burbles, amp feedback and ghostly choirs.

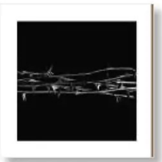
Adrian Corker

★★★

9 Spaces

SN VARIATIONS. DL

Adrian Corker's previous release, *Tin Star: Liverpool*, was one of MOJO's soundtracks of 2020. This digital-only mini-LP find him working remotely with Chris Watson, Takuma Watanabe, Tatsuhisa Yamamoto, the Ligeti Quartet and more, utilising the drones, groans and ghost broadcasts of a Russian electro magnetic receiver as if they were a separate collaborative musician. *AM*



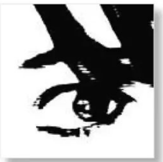
Amenra

★★★★

De Doorn

RELAPSE. CD/DL/LP/MC

Belgium's hardcore crusaders' seventh, with more moments of delicate beauty than before. Colin H Van Eeckhout's spoken word confidences are offset by vocals from Oathbreaker's Caro Tanghe, guitar/drum onslaughts and blood-curdling screams that peak on Ogentroost. *AC*



Gemma Cullingford

★★★★

Let Me Speak

OUTRÉ. CD/DL/LP

Ode To Billy Joe retold in deadpan *Sprechgesang* set to a subatomic pulse is just one highlight on this solo debut from half of Norwich duo Sink Ya Teeth. See also: Wide Boys' space pop, skewering far-right hate with sampled flutes. *JB*

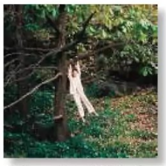
Mabe Fratti

★★★★

Será Que Ahora Podremos Entendernos?

UNHEARD OF HOPE. CD/DL/LP

Guatemalan cellist Fratti's second is awash with complex harmonies and cathartic mantras. Collaborations with Claire Rousay and Mexican experimentalists Tajak ladle on otherworldly atmospherics. *AC*



Maple Glider

★★★

To Enjoy Is The Only Thing

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

Melbourne's Tori Zietsch's Weyes Blood-y vocal opulence elevates her debut from a "big pool of self-reflection" post-break-up. Bleak songs, written in a Brighton winter, are transformed in the honeyed light of Australian summer. *JB*

Lucy Kruger

★★★★

Transit Tapes

UNIQUE. DL/LP

Subtitled *For Women Who Move Furniture Around*, Berlin-based South African's slowly unfurling songs may hold psycho-kinetic power to shift heavy objects. Highlight: A Stranger's Chest (darkly romantic triste, not sturdy trunk) with its Codeine-like rumbling guitar cadence. *JB*

Peace Flag Ensemble

★★★

Noteland

WE ARE BUSY BODIES. DL/LP

Keith Jarrett and Talk Talk vapours suffuse Saskatchewan jazz collective's pastoral debut. Be it cascading Human Pyramid or pensive Presentism, bright trumpet and wilted sax punctuate Jon Neher's piano improvs. *AC*

Sebastian Plano

★★★

Save Me Not

MERCURY KX. CD/DL/LP

Argentinian composer doubles down on enigmatic yearning melancholy, similar to Nils Frahm or Ólafur Arnalds. His intimate minimalist layering of notes on three-part Souls Suite and the somnambulant sprawl of Never Learned is movingly poignant. *AC*

LAWRENCE ROTHMAN
GOOD MORNING AMERICA

Lawrence Rothman

★★★

Good Morning, America

KRO. CD/DL

LA producer Rothman set up mobile studios – in church; an empty shopping mall – with guests including Lucinda Williams (majestic on Decent Man) for this brooding, state-of-the-nation set. *JB*

Chris Schlarb & Chad Taylor

★★★★

Time No Changes

ASTRAL SPIRITS/BIG EGO. DL/LP

Mellow, elegantly improvised set of Sandy Bull-style folk-jazz from Psychic Temple frontman Schlarb and hyper-creative drummer Taylor. Schlarb's crisp production makes every note and beat sound at once nonchalant and precise. *JM*

ON ACCOUNT OF EXILE

Trevor Sensor

★★★★

On Account Of Exile

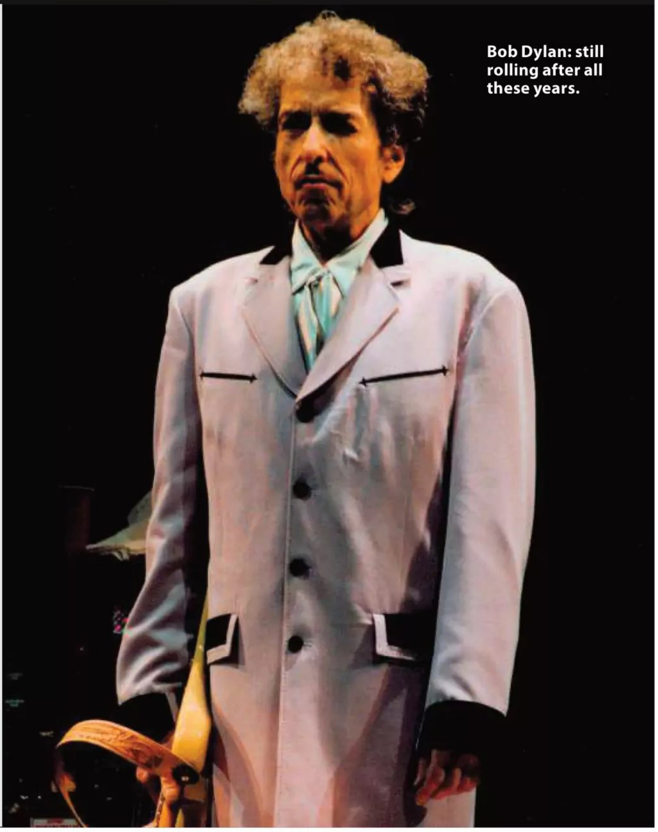
HIGH BLACK DESERT. CD/DL/LP

Only 27 but with a voice aged in sour mash, Trevor Sensor deftly sketches a fictional American drifter on songs of personal dislocation and social anomie; unlucky men, grievous angels and – the Bat-signal for folk singer-songwriters – Bob Dylan. *JB*

EXTENDED PLAY

Podcasts

"…Things should start to get interesting right about now." Journalist John Harris quotes from Mississippi, the *Love And Theft* track, to kick-off the latest episode of **Is It Rolling Bob?** Celebrating Dylan's 80th alongside regular hosts Kerry Shale and Lucas Hare, Harris is great: insightful and funny – especially recalling his close encounter with Dylan at the O2 (spoiler: Charlie Sexton loves The Fast Show). Online music journalism archive **Rock's Backpages** looks back over 100 episodes of their podcast: a conversational tour of their library with guests like writer Caroline Boucher and her excellent Zappa and Beefheart anecdotes. Podcasts are ideally suited to such niche exploration as **For Your Ears Only**, a series on film and TV music hosted by actress Jodhi May and featuring such composers as Ludwig Göransson (Black Panther; Tenet) and Paul Epworth (Skyfall). MOJO's Jim Irvin hosts **You're Not On The List**, excavating his guest's personal buried treasure, including our own Andrew Male (delightful on Nada Surf's unfashionably flannel-shirted *Let Go*) and Pete Paphides' fondness for Prefab Sprout's final LP, *Crimson/Red*. Each episode comes accompanied by a Spotify playlist.



Bob Dylan: still rolling after all these years.

Alamy

Chris Sharkey

★★★

Presets

NOT APPLICABLE. CD/DL

A member of Acoustic Ladyland and TrioVD, here Sharkey's electric guitar and hardware improvs veer from industrial noise (The Sharecropper's Daughter) to deep hymnals (Evangelist) and blurry hypnagogia (Torpid Metacarpals), with glimpses of Steve Reich and Fennesz. *AC*

Hassan Wargui

★★★

Tiddukla

HIVE MIND. DL/LP

The Master Musicians Of Joujouka recast as a bluegrass band is a stretch, but Wargui is a Moroccan mountains musician who, with his band, revitalises local Berber culture on a banjo. A beguiling, hypnotic and immensely beautiful find. *JM*

academyevents
by arrangement with THE MAGNIFICENT AGENCY presents

CAST

ALL CHANGE
25th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

PLAYING THE CLASSIC ALBUM IN IT'S ENTIRETY
PLUS GREATEST HITS SET

PLUS GUESTS

JANUARY 2022
13 **OXFORD** O$_2$ ACADEMY
14 **LIVERPOOL** O$_2$ ACADEMY
15 **BIRMINGHAM** O$_2$ INSTITUTE
16 **LEICESTER** O$_2$ ACADEMY
21 **MANCHESTER** O$_2$ RITZ
22 **LEEDS** O$_2$ ACADEMY
23 **NEWCASTLE** O$_2$ CITY HALL
29 **LONDON** O$_2$ SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

(ALL DATES RE-ARRANGED FROM 2021)

CASTBAND.CO.UK
In association with DF CONCERTS and MJR

academyevents
REGULAR MUSIC & THE ROUNDHOUSE presents

Ocean Colour Scene

plus special guest
Tom Clarke*
(from The Enemy)

RESCHEDULED FROM 2020

2021

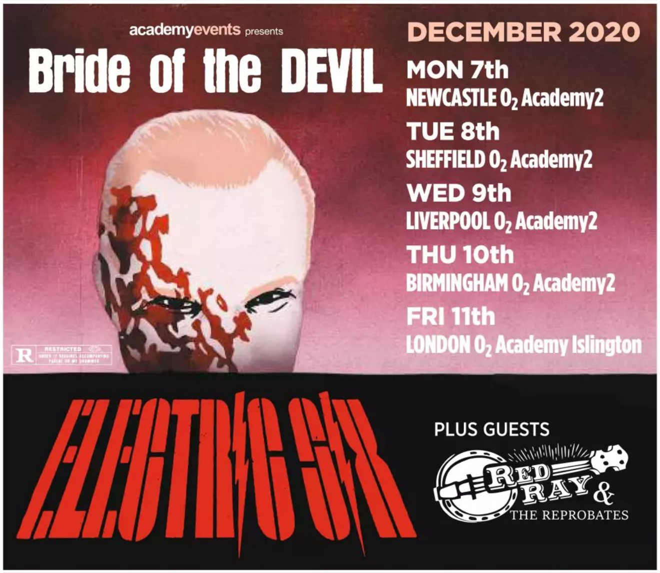
S SOLD OUT th & Wed 22nd December
BIRMINGHAM O$_2$ ACADEMY*

Tue 14th, Wed 15th, T SOLD OUT th & S SOLD OUT th December
GLASGOW BARROWLAND

S SOLD OUT th & Mon 20th December
LONDON ROUNDHOUSE*

T SOLD OUT rd December
MANCHESTER O$_2$ VICTORIA WAREHOUSE*

oceancolourscene.com



academyevents presents

Bride of the DEVIL

R RESTRICTED UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR MY GRAMMAR

DECEMBER 2020

MON 7th
NEWCASTLE O$_2$ Academy2

TUE 8th
SHEFFIELD O$_2$ Academy2

WED 9th
LIVERPOOL O$_2$ Academy2

THU 10th
BIRMINGHAM O$_2$ Academy2

FRI 11th
LONDON O$_2$ Academy Islington

ELECTRIC SIX

PLUS GUESTS
RED RAY & THE REPROBATES

academyevents
& **GHOSTWRITER** in association with **SPIDER TOURING** present

THE WEDDING PRESENT
seamonsters
30th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

PLAYING THE ALBUM IN ITS ENTIRETY PLUS CLASSIC TRACKS

PLUS GUESTS

Thu 18th November 2021
MANCHESTER O$_2$ RITZ

Thu 25th November 2021
BRISTOL O$_2$ ACADEMY

Sat 27th November 2021
LONDON O$_2$ FORUM KENTISH TOWN

theweddingpresent.co.uk

academyevents
by arrangement with THE MAGNIFICENT AGENCY presents

ALABAMA 3

STEP 13:
THE DIVINE INTERVENTION TOUR

MARCH 2022
18 BIRMINGHAM O$_2$ INSTITUTE
19 LIVERPOOL O$_2$ ACADEMY
APRIL 2022
03 BOURNEMOUTH THE OLD FIRE STATION
07 NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP
16 MANCHESTER O$_2$ RITZ
28 OXFORD O$_2$ ACADEMY
29 BRISTOL O$_2$ ACADEMY
30 LONDON O$_2$ SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

ALABAMA3.CO.UK

academyevents presents

PEARL JAM UK

est. 2010

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PEARL JAM TRIBUTE

SATURDAY 4th DECEMBER 2021
O$_2$ SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE
LONDON

pearljamuk.com

FULL UK TOUR STARTS SEPTEMBER

TICKETMASTER.CO.UK & ALL USUAL AGENTS

Map to the treasure

Extensive eight-album box set charts the mysteries of the influential singer-songwriter. By **Victoria Segal**.

Laura Nyro

★★★★★

American Dreamer

MADFISH/SNAPPER MUSIC. LP

Laura Nyro
AMERICAN DREAMER

> "That 'freakishness' that Nyro detected – the difference between hothouse exotic and potential triffid – becomes clear."

ON MR BLUE (Song Of Communications), the opening track of her 1978 album *Nested*, Laura Nyro reports a phone conversation with a lover. "He said, 'Sweetheart, look, you know what happens when we get together/I mean I've heard of liberation, but sweetheart – you're in outer space.'" Too free, too untethered, too much – it was the kind of accusation that followed Nyro for most of her life. "If anybody could be miscast, it's me," she said in a 1970 interview with Bessie Smith biographer Chris Albertson. "That's been my problem, because if you put my music in the wrong place, it becomes a freak."

Finding the right place for her music – and for Nyro herself – has never been a simple matter. A press advert for her 1966 debut single, Wedding Bell Blues, showed the Bronx-born 19-year-old in grudging bridalwear, glowering over a bouquet. At 1967's Monterey Pop Festival, she wore black to regale the West Coast flower children with the astringent Poverty Train, its occult undertow – "I just saw the devil and he's smiling at me" – way ahead of the counterculture's sympathy for such things. (Film footage later suggested cries of "Boo!" were actually "Beautiful!")

While tracks from her debut, 1967's *More Than A New Discovery*, were grist to the mainstream hit machine – Barbra Streisand called her 1971 album *Stoney End* after one of its three Nyro covers; Frank Sinatra, in hip satin jacket, sang Sweet Blindness with The 5th Dimension on TV – attaching the writer to her songs made them a harder sell. As a result, it's tempting to write about Nyro as if you're providing character references for her, pushing for that big-time showbusiness job she never quite landed. Bob Dylan loved her chords. Stephen Sondheim was a fan. "Laura Nyro, you can lump me in with," Joni Mitchell told MOJO in 2003. Since her death from ovarian cancer in 1997, aged 49, there have been regular flashes of Nyro worship – not least her 2012 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by a teary Bette Midler. Nyro remains cultish compared with Mitchell, or Carole King (who influenced her profoundly and who she influenced right back), but for an artist often described as "unsung", she frequently comes through surprisingly loud.

American Dreamer collects her first seven albums – including the remarkable run of *Eli And The Thirteenth Confession*, 1969's *New York Tendaberry*, and 1970's *Christmas And The Beads Of Sweat* – with an additional disc of demos, live tracks and single versions. In the process, it underlines why Nyro was never really destined for the same blue-chip recognition as Mitchell or King. It wasn't her voice: as Charlie Calello, co-producer of *Eli And The Thirteenth Confession* and 1976's *Smile*, comments, "when you take into consideration some of the people who were her contemporaries, like Dylan, come on."

Instead, that "freakishness" that Nyro detected – the slight but vital different between hothouse exotic and potential triffid – is what becomes clear. Even when Nyro is working most tightly along soulful Brill Building pop lines on *More Than A New Discovery*, there's an instability to her songs, a sense that the churchy longing of He's A Runner or I Never Meant To Hurt You's radical empathy could spill over, burst banks. By the time of *New York Tendaberry*, it's a flood. It applies to the era's cosmic joy, too: both Nyro's Stoned Soul Picnic and Joni Mitchell's Chelsea Morning are soaked in colour-wheeling sensory bliss, yet Nyro, making up her own words ("can you surry?"), seems to have taken all the supporting walls out of her song, risking collapse.

When she tries for another '60s staple, the protest song, it's equally unstable. Save The Country, from *New York Tendaberry* (another made-up word), was inspired by the assassinations of John F and Robert Kennedy, a gospel call for cleansing. Yet it changes pace wildly, less a song for marching than a rapturous hurtle towards salvation. Often, it feels as if Nyro is being chased by something. The devil, or Lucifer, appears repeatedly; Eli's Coming, popularised by Three Dog Night, might be about a faithless man, but there's an almost supernatural threat in the repeated name, the warning piano. On her fourth album's Beads Of Sweat, this thumb-pricking quality is heightened again: "Something's coming I know/To devastate my soul." With Blackpatch ("Lipstick on her reefer/Waiting for a match") and Been On A Train's drug-related death, Sinatra and Streisand are long gone, but Lou Reed might have understood.

After her fourth album, however, that intensity partially lifts. Produced by Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, *Gonna Take A Miracle* is a collaboration with her friends Labelle, a fabulous tribute to her pop roots. It includes a brilliantly raw cover of The Shirelles' I Met Him On A Sunday; a carnal You've Really Got A Hold On Me (matched by the demo of her own Emmie) and a version of The Charts' Désiree that predicts the erotic charge of Amy Winehouse's Valerie. For once, it feels as if she's rooted somewhere.

From here, however, her career was formed of retreats and returns. She married and divorced before 1975's *Smile*, a record that begins with one spoken word – "strange" – before launching into a mellow cover of The Moments' Sexy Mama. There's a new smoothness, a recognition this is now a world with Carly Simon in it, yet you could hardly call Money or I Am The Blues subdued. *Nested*, meanwhile, released two months before her son's birth in 1978, comes with softer, moon-and-New-York-City piano, yet Child In A Universe and American Dreamer hit upon war and peace, fight and flight, Nyro's voice still pushing through the mellow haze.

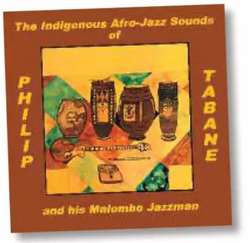
It is a lot, this eight-album demand to live and listen at her pitch. Yet as Nyro, mocked for her liberation in Mr Blue, retorts, "I've been studying the radar in the sky/I can almost run, fly/Listen like the animals do… yes, I'm ready for you." The mainstream might not have been ready for her, but *American Dreamer* emphasises once more exactly where her place should be: out in the world, front and centre, not a freak but a true star.

BACK STORY: SHE'S A RAINBOW

- According to Columbia label head Clive Davis, Laura Nyro was famous for asking session musicians and sound men for "blue" or "orange" sounds. You Don't Love Me When I Cry, from *New York Tendaberry*, was, she said, "warm pale blue with a few white caps on it". But it wasn't just colours that drove her synaesthesia: while recording 1976's *Smile*, she was once asked by co-producer/arranger Charlie Calello what she wanted a song to sound like. "Charlie," she said after a moment's thought, "I want it to be like my chair."

Getty (2)

“I just saw the devil and he’s smiling at me”: Laura Nyro embraces fame, New York City, 1969.



Philip Tabane And His Malombo Jazzman

★★★★

The Indigenous Afro-Jazz Sounds Of…

WE ARE BUSY BODIES. LP

Restlessly experimental 1969 debut by guitarist hailed as South Africa's Sun Ra.

Five years after he took first prize at South Africa's Cold Castle Jazz Festival, Philip Tabane captured his spirited brand of Malombo jazz in one-take studio sessions. A sparse but spirited two-way with percussionist and thumb pianist Gabriel 'Sonnyboy' Thobejane, the breathy chants, lonesome pennywhistle and resonant cow-hide drums of Babedi and Dithabeng build on traditional Ndebele and Sepedi music's healing properties, and ache with reflective stillness. A wild card guitarist, Tabane's Gibson semi-acoustic unexpectedly flits from delicate melodies to fleet mercurial runs and darkly menacing chords amid Inhliziyo's two-note pulse and Kathloganao's almost Celtic interplay, numbers that sound like they were plucked from the ether. Restorative and dynamic, Tabane's sparky yet soothing touch is a salve to the soul.

Andy Cowan

Alice Cooper

★★★

Three Temptations From Alice

RETROWORLD. CD

Alice's *Trash*, *Hey Stoopid* and *The Last Temptation* albums corralled on a 2-CD set.

ALICE COOPER
THREE TEMPTATIONS FROM ALICE

Released in 1989, Poison was hell-bent on becoming Cooper's first Top 10 single since 1977's You And Me, hence the recruitment of hair-metal-affiliated writer Desmond Child to help commercialise Alice, much as he'd helped commercialise Aerosmith circa Dude (Looks Like A Lady). With its cod-horror verses and telegraphed chorus, *Trash*'s Poison reached Number 2 in the UK, but the heavy friend guest-list and co-writer credits had perhaps lost focus by 1991's *Hey Stoopid*, wherein Feed My Frankenstein featured Steve Vai, Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark and a writing credit for Zodiac Mindwarp. The jewel here is 1994's *The Last Temptation*, with its conceptual nod to 1975's *Welcome To My Nightmare*. On *TLT*, Alice regained his Detroit edge and made another great single, the disgruntled, disenfranchised yoof anthem Lost In America.

James McNair

i stand accused
MERSEYBEATS
MERSEYS
MERSEY BEATS

The Merseybeats And Merseys

★★★★

I Stand Accused: The Complete Merseybeats and Merseys Sixties Recordings

GRAPEFRUIT. CD/DL

Mersey pop meets the beat boom: The Beatles once supported them.

Close harmonies were intrinsic to The Merseybeats, with co-leaders Tony Crane and Billy Kinsley's vocals intertwining almost telepathically on their superb series of '60s hits: It's Love That Really Counts; I Think Of You (their biggest, it reached the Top 5); Don't Turn Around; Wishin' And Hopin'. But their B-sides and the On Stage EP revealed a group capable of the rough stuff with enthusiastic readings of Long Tall Sally, Shame et al reminding us that they cut their teeth in Liverpool's clubs and pubs. When the group split in 1966, Crane and Kinsley formed The Merseys, best known for the classic Sorrow, later covered by Bowie. This double CD collects everything by the two groups plus their various spin-offs including erstwhile Merseybeat member John Gustafson's in-demand Polydor 45s.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★

Alligator Records: 50 Years Of Genuine Houserockin' Music

ALLIGATOR. CD

The autobiography of the Chicago-based blues label in a 58-track 3-CD set.

ALLIGATOR RECORDS
50 YEARS OF GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' MUSIC

In 1971, when Bruce Iglauer bet his new label's shoestring all on Hound Dog Taylor, he could not have imagined that Alligator Records would be around to celebrate 50 years later, with 350-plus other releases besides. But here they are: the original heavy-hitters Koko Taylor, Albert Collins, Son Seals and Lonnie Brooks; the stalwarts Shemekia Copeland, Marcia Ball, Elvin Bishop, Rick Estrin, Tinsley Ellis and Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials; the slightly left-field Holmes Brothers, Mavis Staples and C.J. Chenier; and the heart-stirring second-wave generation of Janiva Magness, Toronzo Cannon, Selwyn Birchwood and Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram. In both music and notes, the collection not only tells a story of hard work and hard-won success, but like a kaleidoscope refracts many of the shifts of tone and colour, style and subject-matter, in the blues of our time.

Tony Russell

The Sorrows

★★★

Pink, Purple, Yellow & Red: The Complete Sorrows

GRAPEFRUIT. CD/DL

Singles, albums, foreign language recordings, live tracks, outtakes and rarities.

PINK PURPLE YELLOW AND RED
THE COMPLETE
SORROWS

The Coventry outfit's entire recordings, together for the first time. The essential parts: the Don Fardon led 'classic' line-up's 1965 UK LP *Take A Heart*, a tough freakbeat paragon including the brooding title track. Also, the four previously unissued Joe Meek-produced cuts from 1964, no messing R&B covers including harmonica-drenched takes on Hoochie Coochie Man and Don't Start Me Talkin'. Then the marginalia, mostly *sans* Fardon, when the group moved to Italy and it gets confusing, with various incarnations experimenting in heavy psych. The best bits: Ypotron, their 1966 theme to the Italian spy film of the same name; 1968's nine-track demo album; '69's Italy-only *Old Songs, New Songs*. The inclusion of a 1980 reunion gig seems wholly unnecessary.

Lois Wilson

Lonnie Mack

★★★★

Sa-Ba-Hoola! Two Sides Of Lonnie Mack – Fraternity Recordings 1963-1967

ACE. CD/DL

A best-of the guitar pioneer's early rockers.

SA-BA-HOOLA!
LONNIE MACK

When Rolling Stone proclaimed Mack "in a class by himself" in 1968, his 1963 debut LP *The Wham Of That Memphis Man* was re-released and Mack was resurrected from obscurity. Revered by Jeff Beck, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Bootsy Collins, his instrumentals of Chuck Berry's Memphis and his own Wham! prove why: flashy, lightning-fast runs; whammy-bar mastery; thrilling dynamics; orgasmic resolution. This 14-song anthology is divided by instrumentals (those two included) and vocals – he was also one of the mightiest blue-eyed soul men. Grounded in gospel, he's pleading, testifying, screaming and sweating about the big stuff on Where There's A Will. His voice shared with his guitar the valleys-and-peaks approach within a song's confines. But it was his innovative pyrotechnics up and down the frets that changed the language of rock forever.

Michael Simmons

Various

★★★★

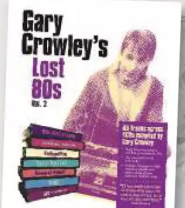
Gary Crowley's Lost 80s Vol. 2

DEMON. CD/DL/LP

More cult classics and rare grooves from the radio DJ's '80s.

Ready for the '80s: (from left) Sean Rowley, Dave Pearce, Dr Robert, Gary Crowley.

Barry Plummer



ANOTHER demonstration of just how generative the '80s music scene could be: these 65 choice tracks over four discs span soulful jazz pop, post-punk funk, Brit funk, reggae and electro. Disc one draws a line from The Style Council's Mick's Up to Nick Heyward's Cafe Canada, both mood-stirring, keyboard-led instrumentals. Discs two and three take in innovative covers: Bananarama doing the Sex Pistols; the Kane Gang doing The Staple Singers; The Staples doing Talking Heads (an astonishing Life During Wartime). Disc four is different again, aimed at the dancefloor with 12-inch mixes of Clint Eastwood And General Saint's phenomenal deejay cut Another One Bites The Dust, The Valentine Brothers' modern soul influencer Money's Too Tight To Mention and the magnificent Monster Jam by Spoonie Gee And The Sequence.

Lois Wilson

Dig the dirt

The album that saved Sub Pop gets a deluxe 30th anniversary reissue. By **Stevie Chick**.

Mudhoney: getting ready to outlive the trend they set.

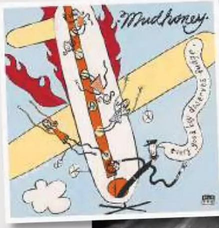
Michael Lavine

Mudhoney

★★★★

Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP


Mudhoney
Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge

THEY'D EFFECTIVELY coined grunge's gnarly sound and deadpan attitude, but just as commercial reward approached Seattle's homegrown scene, pioneers Mudhoney seemed to have run aground. Guitarist Steve Turner felt they'd outlived their purpose. Drummer Dan Peters was moonlighting with Nirvana and Screaming Trees. Frontman Mark Arm was falling deeper under the spell of heroin. And Sub Pop – the label that had cannily marketed grunge – was facing bankruptcy.

Such downer vibes might explain why Mudhoney's first attempt at their second full-length LP fizzled out, but the true reason is more prosaic: the modern, 24-track studio they'd been recording in. Turner now grumbles that these early tracks – included on this deluxe 30th anniversary reissue, along with B-sides and outtakes – "didn't have the dirt". So Mudhoney relocated to the more primitive Egg Studio, in the basement of producer Conrad Uno and equipped with an 8-track recording desk built for Stax Records back in the '60s.

At Egg, Turner took the wheel and nudged Mudhoney away from Seattle's trademark '70s heaviness, towards his beloved '60s garage rock, wah wah pedals benched in favour of more era-correct instruments. So the stop-start riff of Who You Drivin' Now? – swiping at both an unnamed Seattle scenester and the Pinto, a Ford automobile notorious for catching fire – was accented by Arm's Farfisa organ. Turner wheezed acidic harmonica over Move On and blew plaintive Dylanesque counter-melodies on affecting rumble Pokin' Around, one of a clutch of songs on *…Fudge* that showcased songwriting that had matured beyond the blackly comedic rut-rock of their origins. Broken Hands, meanwhile, built the harmonic outro to Neil Young's Cinnamon Girl into a smouldering epic that remains one of Mudhoney's finest.

Released in July 1991, the initial sales of *…Fudge* – 100,000 units, which Sub Pop's Bruce Pavitt considered akin to platinum status for an indie album – won the label a momentary reprieve. However, the actual multi-platinum success of Nirvana's *Nevermind* secured Sub Pop's future, that breakthrough album resulting from an upgrade to a big-time studio where their sound was buffed up to a radio-friendly sheen.

As the grunge era wore on and punk rock finally "broke", *…Fudge*'s raw edges and freewheeling garage-rock moves sounded further and further adrift from the *zeitgeist*. Instead of grasping the moment, they'd made an album which – with its canny songcraft, biting wit and quest for "the dirt" – remains timeless. Scorning bogus concepts like "careerism" and "professionalism" to follow their instincts and their passions, *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge* finds a group wise enough to outlive the trend they set, who burn brightly and brilliantly to this day.

Lanterns On The Lake

★★★★

Gracious Tide, Take Me Home

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Tenth-anniversary makeover of the stately Tynesiders' debut album.

A decade on from its first appearance, Lanterns On The Lake's debut album is reissued with the fresh context of knowing what came later. Early on, the Newcastle outfit described themselves as "cinematic indie". Here, there's a folkiness (viz, If I've Been Unkind) which was later lost. Also, the glitchiness and sepulchral approach of Iceland's múm (The Places We Call Home). Hints of Mazzy Star too. Despite the exquisiteness, what's now apparent is that the building blocks had not yet fused. During the ensuing and steady march, constant honing ensured it all gelled and, last year, dramatic fourth album *Spook The Herd* was shortlisted for the Mercury Prize. With five previously unheard bonus tracks from the album sessions (the spectral Sapsorrow is great), this is a welcome reminder of how single-mindedness can bring artistic rewards.

Kieron Tyler

Matthew Dear

★★★

Preacher's Sigh & Potion: Lost Album

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL. CD/DL/LP

Texan electronic musician's 2009 LP, now off the shelf.

Back in 2008/9, in-between releasing his third and fourth albums – 2007's housey *Asa Breed* and the moody cinematic pop of 2010's *Black City* – Matthew Dear experimented with a different direction. Borrowing his country guitar-playing father's instruments and taking a loop-based approach to traditional finger-picking styles, often layered over sparse beats, he produced 11 tracks before deciding not to release them. In some instances, it's easy to see why, with the scrappy post-modern blues of Crash And Burn being a less successful take on Beck's early records. Far more cohesive are Muscle Beach's tale of a juvenile delinquent (with his "fingers caught in the windowsill") and the sub-aqueous atmosphere of mumbly bad habits confessional Supper Times. But overall, *Preacher's Sigh & Potion…* has a sketchy feel that will likely only appeal to those keen to hear every stage of Dear's musical development.

Tom Doyle

Mistreater

★★★★

Hell's Fire

ON THE DOLE. LP

Ultra-obscure Ohio stoner-metal find from 1981.

MISTREATER
hell's fire

Courtesy of the Swedish imprint behind the *Jobcentre Rejects* comps of rare early-'80s New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, here's a stand-alone US heavy metal reissue to die for. Mistreater hailed not from Brum or Wolverhampton, but Creston, Ohio, a backwater 'village' sandwiched between Cleveland and Akron. Their fret-mangling leader, Larry Nottingham, much like Tony Iommi and other axe-wielding Midlanders, was a blue-collar industrial worker who, at 21, corralled his comrades to blast out *Hell's Fire* in a 17-hour weekend at Indiana's cheapo 700 West facility and self-release a thousand copies, all for just $1,700. Woefully retro in a region then fecund with punk rock, this irredeemably hard-rocking quartet audibly doted on Deep Purple's *Machine Head* and all things Sabbath, yet, however unwittingly, also packed the feral urgency of Cleveland punkers The Dead Boys, making for a uniquely steely listen today. Recorded entirely live but for Curt Luedy's Gillan-esque keening, these nuggets achieve singular heaviosity.

Andrew Perry

Breathless

★★★★

Between Happiness And Heartache

TENOR VOSSA. DL/LP

30th anniversary pink vinyl edition of London quartet's fourth and finest album.

There are voices suited to imparting bittersweet regret, and then there are voices that sound irredeemably bereaved, like Dominic Appleton. He ensures that Breathless have always veered much closer to heartache than happiness, just in case song titles like I Never Know Where You Are and Help Me Get Over It haven't made it plain enough. Virtually a concept album about unrequited love, the record also chooses for its sole cover The Only Ones' rarity Flowers Die ("I feel so helplessly alone, alone, alone, alone"). Appleton employs no masking metaphors, neither do his gorgeous melodies try to put on a brave face. That said, *Between…* is as liable to flex its muscles in a gothic, dreampop fashion as it is exposing delicate veins and broken hearts. Comes with a downloadable bonus track of 1992's B-side Everything I See.

Martin Aston

BREATHLESS

Completely at odds: Annette Peacock, on-stage at the Bataclan, Paris, 1981.

FILE UNDER...

Shake a tail feather

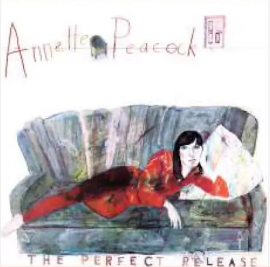
Composer and polemicist Annette Peacock had to fly across the Atlantic to fully reveal herself. By **Jim Irvin**.

IT'S SO TOUGH to pin down what Annette Peacock does, I've rewritten this column three times – so please take everything I'm about to say with a pinch of salt! Born in 1941, Peacock was a seasoned practitioner in the New York jazz avant-garde by the time she moved to London in the late '70s. She'd also been a pioneer of electronic music, with second husband Paul Bley, an early adopter of the Moog synthesizer, using it to distort and colour her singing voice as early as 1969. She is reportedly the person who turned David Bowie onto electronic music (and may have introduced him to her friend, pianist Mike Garson), while they were both signed to RCA. She made the hip *I'm The One* there in 1972, just after *The Paul Bley Synthesizer Show*, an album entirely comprising her compositions. (Bley had form for this: *Barrage* in 1965 was composed by his previous wife, Carla Bley.) In the future she'd make records that have elements of chamber music, opera, and *musique concrète*; her output is essentially category-free, though rooted in the mood of jazz. On a brace of albums for the curious Aura label, now reissued by Sundazed, she crafted rock and funk grooves as the basis for stream-of-consciousness lyrics, sometimes sung, sometimes intoned like a sleepy sermon.

For *X-Dreams* ★★★★ (Aura/Sundazed) her second LP, recorded in London and released in 1978, she mothballed the synth and the free jazz and used the current cream of session musicians – among them rock guitarists Mick Ronson and Chris Spedding, drummers Bill Bruford and John Halsey and sax player George Kahn – to conjure candid ruminations about sexual politics. My Mama Never Taught Me How To Cook utilises a languid funk which Peacock wails over like Betty Davis: "I'm not good at the wheeling, not much better at the dealing, but I'm a fantastic ride." Then she caps it with "Hey man, my destiny is not to serve/I'm a woman, my destiny is to create." The 11-minute Real & Defined Androgens is reminiscent of Roxy Music's The Bogus Man, a mid-tempo groove rolled around and around while it becomes increasingly noisy and frenetic, Peacock's seductive speak-sing delivery gently turning up the heat.

Her breathy singing voice – like a blend of Dusty Springfield and Peggy Lee – is featured on the mellower second side for This Feel Within and gorgeous Too Much In the Skies, where her lyrical piano playing really connects. A sleazy, reharmonised crack at Elvis's Don't Be Cruel is akin to one of John Cale's vaguely irreverent revisits. I recall this appearing as a single in 1978 and it feeling completely at odds with what was happening at the time, but all the more weirdly exotic for it.

ANNETTE PEACOCK X-DREAMS



"Her breathy voice, a blend of Dusty and Peggy Lee."

The following year's companion piece, *The Perfect Release* ★★★★ (Aura/Sundazed) is funkier musically, more ambivalent lyrically. "Life's hopeful between the thighs," she sighs on The Succubus, though on Love's Out To Lunch she notes, "There's more to love than the balling." American Sport is scathing about capitalism, the reggae-tinged Rubber Hunger appears to be about someone addicted to sex toys, and on lengthy, slap-bass closer Survival she casts herself as a distaff Gil Scott-Heron speaking of personal revolution. "All leaders are opportunists… drawn by the cry of a multitude," she declares.

These idiosyncratic albums, long out of print on vinyl, come in handsome new editions, mastered at Third Man, pressed on lurid coloured vinyl, and, in the case of *X-Dreams*, with added sleevenotes. Still unclassifiable, their unique spirit and mesmerising mood holds up very well.

Dalle APRF

Chris Barber

★★★★

A Trailblazer's Legacy

THE LAST MUSIC COMPANY. CD/DL

Magnificent tribute to the late Godfather of British jazz, blues and skiffle.

Barber's death earlier this year at the age of 90 closed an important chapter in post-war British popular music; an epoch indelibly shaped by the Welwyn Garden City trombonist's adventures in black American music that began in the 1950s and which inspired several generations of young British musicians, including The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. Spanning 1951-2018, this 4-CD compendium brings together essential studio and live recordings that attest to Barber's pioneering spirit via his exploration of New Orleans-style 'trad jazz' and his role in popularising skiffle (he played bass on Lonnie Donegan's landmark Rock Island Line). Among the highlights are collaborations with Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, and Van Morrison, while Alyn Shipton's 18,000-word essay and a stunning array of archival photographs helps to bring Barber's remarkable story alive.

Charles Waring

Various

★★★★

The Last Shall Be First: The JCR Records Story, Volume Two

BIBLE & TIRE. CD/DL

Another 18 nourishing tracks of 'lost' gospel from small Memphis label.

Almost exactly a year ago, the first instalment of highlights from JCR, a Memphis label founded by local pastor Juan Shipp to house off-cuts from his *other* label, D-Vine Spiritual, was testament to a man of uncompromising judgement. Although the acts 'relegated' to JCR were often raw, they were honest, believable and definitely not untalented, their soul-flavoured gospel driven by uplifting performances. Here, old friends return – The Calvary Nightingales, who'd opened *Volume One*, The Dixie Wonders, The Bible Tones, the excellent Spiritual Harmonizers – and there are seven welcome new additions. The Friendly QC's' Let's Praise His Name struts along at a fierce pace, the tempo set by lithesome bass guitar, while The Sons Of Harmony and The Silver Wings feature beefy lead voices and The Breckenridge Singers' Man On The Moon foresees that "some day there'll be lots of people living on the moon."

Geoff Brown

Tony Allen & Africa 70

★★★★

No Accommodation For Lagos

COMET. LP

The Afrobeat drummer's last solo gasp with Fela.

Continuing their comprehensive Tony Allen reissue programme, the latest offering from French label Comet is *No Accommodation For Lagos*, the third of the solo albums that drummer Allen recorded with Africa 70 behind him and Fela Kuti in the producer's chair. On the A-side, over a tight Afrobeat groove that is entirely in keeping with Fela's late-'70s releases, vocalist Candido Obajimi sings of the chronic housing shortages facing new arrivals in the Nigerian capital, with Fela on didactic electric piano and Allen procuring a complex rhythmic backbeat. On the more fluid B-side, the musings on Afrobeat's content and form titled African Message points to the evolving hybrid style that Allen would further develop with his African Messengers on subsequent release *No Discrimination*, which is also released in the series, the latter marking his definitive break with Fela.

David Katz

Various

★★★★

Utopic Cities: Progressive Jazz In Belgium 1968-1979

SDBAN. CD/DL/LP

Fusion and avant-garde gems from a revolutionary era in Belgian jazz.

As a companion piece to 2017's *Let's Get Swinging*, this esoteric, eclectic selection shows how Belgian's jazz musicians mobilised after 1968's riots, surprised to find their guerrilla take on the US avant-garde embraced by rebellious youth. While that's more than covered by adventurous, genuinely out-there turns by Brussels Art Quintet, Raphaël and Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band, its early jazz fusions impress even more. Electric pianist Marc Moulin sets the bar high (both with Placebo and amid the wailing hippopotamus cries of Tohubohu), matched by Solis Lacus's funky title track, a nine-minute stunner from Koen De Bruyne, and Californian pianist Ron Wilson's arch vocal turn with Open Sky Unit. Repeat credits speak of the Belgian scene's often-incestuous nature – it effectively became a jazz island, entire of itself.

Andy Cowan

Core values

Carr is just one of seven stars on a sensational proto hip-hop UK jazz-rock jamboree.

By **Ben Thompson.**

Ian Carr's Nucleus

★★★★★

Roots

BEWITHRECORDS. CD/DL/LP

"IT'S BASICALLY already hip-hop." Thus one veteran UK turntablist explains the enduring allure this previously hard-to-locate 1973 Vertigo landmark's amazing title-track has for the blunted beats fraternity. Edited down from its original 40 minutes to a pithy nine and a half, Roots is at the same time one very long breakbeat, and as close as fully home-grown British jazz ever got (pretty damn adjacent in this case) to the entrancing fluidity of Miles Davis in his John McLaughlin phase. The best I can do for a capsule description is Fela Kuti trying to cover Billy Cobham's Spectrum with David Axelrod in the control room.

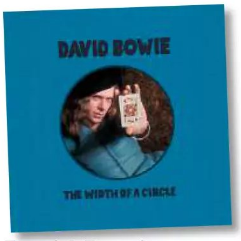
Maybe you're a Nucleus neophyte, keen to put the closing number on *Direct Hits* back in its original context. (If Alan Partridge was right about The Beatles' best album being *The Beatles' Greatest Hits*, how much more true might that be of Ian Carr's shape-shifting jazz-rock fusion ensemble?) Or perhaps you were sent this way by Madlib's deft Roots repurposing. Last but not least, I would also say that for those previously haunted by fear of fusion, *Roots* would be a hell of a gateway drug.

This is the sixth and perhaps best of the nine albums that different versions of Ian Carr's Nucleus released from 1970-75. While Miles Davis was the obvious contemporary parallel in terms of shifting personnel on a musical mission where one man's word being law seems to have brought out the best in everyone, posterity allows us to mix in The Fall as a rogue comparative element (*Belladonna*, the fourth in the sequence, was credited to Carr alone, because the only ones that could stand the pace by that point were him and his granny on bongos).

Pieced together at the time from various sources, reflecting the precariousness of such virtuosic endeavour (can you guess which track began life as the third movement in a four-part suite to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday?), *Roots* can be heard almost half a century on as a brilliantly sequenced, entirely satisfying musical adventure. The stunning theoretical handbrake turn from the ticking hi-hat Herbie Hancock heist movie soundtrack of the opening number into the Arcadian vocal space-jazz of Images, featuring singer Joy Yates, is negotiated with effortless poise. The whole world is indeed Nucleus's oyster-bed. And as for the concluding segue from the cowbell-driven jazz/metal *musique concrète* of Odokamona into the redemptive Mingus tribute of Southern Roots And Celebration, well, you've got to hear it to believe it.

Ian Carr: embarked on an entirely satisfying musical adventure.

Getty



David Bowie

★★★★

The Width Of A Circle

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL

Two-disc compilation of live performances and radically enhanced studio fare.

David Bowie's pre-*Hunky Dory* output has many a devotee enchanted by his folky, whimsical early catalogue, and this compilation will not disappoint. CD1, Bowie's 1970 performance on BBC1's Sunday showcase for new music, Top Gear, is compered by a snoozy prog-rock version of John Peel. Yes, Bowie's live vocal is excellent on a cover of Jacques Brel's Amsterdam, and the sound is seriously beefed up by the addition of Tony Visconti (bass) and Mick Ronson (lead guitar) partway through the set, but massively new or consistently brilliant it is not. CD2, a mix of live cuts and restored studio tracks, does indicate that Bowie was indeed becoming the special one: the single edits of Memory Of A Free Festival and All The Madmen, along with the possessed Nietzschean The Supermen, are blueprints for Bowie's radical musical future.

David Buckley

Lipstick Killers

★★★★

Strange Flash: Studio & Live '78-81

GROWN UP WRONG! CD/LP

Two wild CDs of Aussie garage revival one-hit wonders.

LIPSTICK KILLERS
STRANGE FLASH

Founded in the Sydney high-energy slipstream of Radio Birdman, Lipstick Killers released only one single during their brief lifetime, but it was enough for immortality: the next-wave-*Nuggets* ferocity of 1979's Hindu Gods Of Love, produced by Birdman guitarist Deniz Tek. Incredibly, no studio album followed, and the band did not survive a move to Los Angeles, breaking up on the eve of a deal with Slash Records. This rear-view mirror mayhem – studio demos from 1978 and 1980; stage action in Adelaide and at the LA punk club Madame Wong's – argues for what could have been. Live covers affirm the roots in play (Mitch Ryder, The 13th Floor Elevators), but it's the blazing, bruising invention in the originals (Mesmerizer, Driving The Special Dead, Liquor Fit) that justifies the legend rightly attached to that lone single.

David Fricke

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

★★★★

Back The Way We Came Vol. 1 (2011-2021)

SOUR MASH. 2CD/DL/2LP

Retrospective feast from his inaugural solo decade.

BACK THE WAY WE CAME
VOL. 1

In the fledgling Oasis interview documented on 1995's Wibbling Rivalry, the Gallagher brothers were already arguing about musical evolution, and when the band split in 2009 they'd proved unable to evolve satisfyingly beyond *Morning Glory*'s anthemic humungity, stuck, to quote Noel, in "gression" mode. Since freed of stadium obligation, Gallagher Sr talks of his solo career as "like a flower unfolding" (see MOJO 332). That image holds good for this roughly chronological 18-song canter through his first 10 High Flying years, as tight-arsed neo-Manc strictures quickly loosen to allow delicious infusions from Chicago, New Orleans and Brazil. By CD2's selections from 2019-20's three EPs, ethereal disco (Black Star Dancing) and untethered joy (A Dream Is All I Need To Get By) are the defining characteristics. Two new gospel-voiced cuts, the slow-burning We're On Our Way Now and the breezy, Style Council-ish Flying On The Ground, complete the sense of spiritual uplift.

Andrew Perry

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

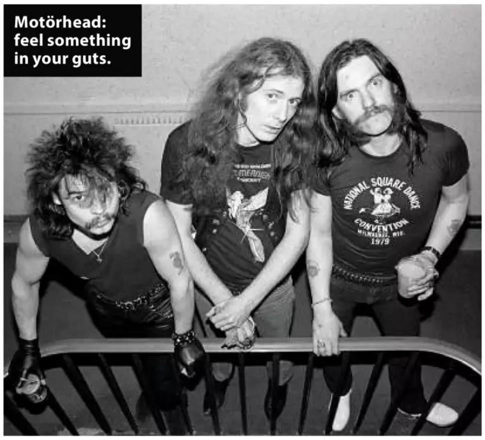
The White Stripes

White Blood Cells XX

THIRD MAN

"Ice cream sandwich at the liquor store", anyone? That's the tantalising proposition offered up in That's Where It's At, one of many unheard White Stripes gems on the hefty *White Blood Cells XX* set for subscribers to Third Man's Vault series. Thirteen demos and outtakes chart the album's gestation, often sketchily essayed on a boombox. Unreleased songs are half-formed: the sweeter That's Where It's At would eventually become the operatically paranoid I Think I Smell A Rat, with only the "baseball bat" reference retained from this first lyrical draft. The McCartneyish Ooh-Aah and Feel Like I'm Three Feet Tall were never, it seems, completed. It's a candid portrait of a songwriter at work, complemented by a 2001 Louisville set that bottles the still-shocking intensity of The White Stripes live experience (Son House's Death Letter, as at so many 2001 shows, is outrageous and pivotal). There's also an hour of in-studio footage: a raw and radical garage band, on the cusp of something unimaginable.

John Mulvey



Motörhead: feel something in your guts.

Rick Saunders

Miles Davis

★★★★

Merci Miles! Live At Vienne

WARNER BROS. CD/DL/LP

Trumpet legend's poignant farewell to France.

MILES DAVIS
LIVE AT VIENNE

France had always been a happy hunting ground for Miles Davis since his first visit in 1949; it's where he fell in love with actress Juliette Greco and also recorded one of his finest albums, 1958's *Ascenseur Pour L'échafaud*. His final tour there in July 1991, three months before his death, saw him appear at the Vienne jazz festival. That concert is now released to mark the 30th anniversary of his passing. Despite his supposed frailty, Miles doesn't sound like he's ailing on the set's eight tracks, which include terrific extended versions of Michael Jackson's Human Nature and Cyndi Lauper's Time After Time. Also noteworthy are a couple of Prince tunes (the funk-powered Penetration and bluesy Jailbait), which allow the trumpeter's excellent band to flex its chops. A must-hear album for fans of late period Miles.

Charles Waring

Motörhead

★★★★★

No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith – 40th Anniversary Box-Set

BMG / SANCTUARY. CD/LP

The apogee of their "everything louder than everything else" motto.

A UK Number 1 with a bullet (belt) in June 1981, *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* still stands as the definitive document of Motörhead's very British din. If you were one of denim and leather's great unwashed, experiencing their frantic, no frills wattage live was a cherished rite of passage. It was also a bit like salmonella: something to feel in your guts and survive. Newly expanded to include soundcheck recordings and the entirety of the Newcastle and Leeds gigs from which the original tracklisting was culled, this 40th anniversary celebration speaks of a grubbier, dingier UK, but there's also a notably egalitarian aspect to the band's electrifying, amphetamine-fuelled performances. Lemmy's do or die stage presence is all about inclusivity, and who but Motörhead would pen We Are The Road Crew, a raucous and heartfelt tribute to their indefatigable enablers.

James McNair

Various

★★★★

Studio One Roots

SOUL JAZZ. LP

Blue vinyl reissue of this excellent 2001 compilation makes crucial listening.

STUDIO ONE ROOTS

Studio One's roots reggae output was as enthralling as its ground-breaking ska, a combination of lo-fi equipment, top-notch session players and idiosyncratic recording methods rendering a readily-identifiable sound perfectly suited to the emerging form, which placed an emphasis on social issues and Rastafari consciousness in the early 1970s. Compiled 20 years ago by Honest Jon's Mark Ainley and now available on beautiful blue vinyl, this collection has rare Africa-focused singles from Count Ossie, The Gaylads and Willie Williams, whose Addis A Baba updates the Skatalites classic, while Winston Jarrett's Fear Not is an alternate reading of Burning Spear's Rocking Time. Elsewhere, Bunnie And Skitter lament the murder of Congolese revolutionary Patrice Lumumba, Horsemouth Wallace sets a Mutabaruka identity poem to a melodica adaptation of Do Your Thing, and Alton Ellis describes a vision of racial oppression in symbolic terms.

David Katz

Various

★★★★

Hurdy Gurdy Songs

ACE. CD/DL

Celebrating the psychedelic poet laureate, now in his 75th year.

Donovan's complete investment in the hippy ideal has often distracted from his ability as a tunesmith so this album of interpretations by his '60s peers – the latest in Ace's superb Songwriter Series – is a welcome reminder of his rich songbook and impact on the decade's cultural identity. Spanning 1967 to '71, some of the 24 tracks – like Herman's Hermits' cover of Museum and The Standells' take on Sunshine Superman – closely follow Donovan's psych pop blueprint. Others, though, are more radical in their approach and it's these that provide the thrills; in particular, Dandy's pop reggae version of There Is A Mountain, Lou Rawls' soul jazz reading of Season Of The Witch, Gábor Szabó's psychotropic Three King Fishers, and Eartha Kitt's Hurdy Gurdy Man, in her hands a lusty Chaucerian come-on.

Lois Wilson

P.J. Harvey

★★★★

White Chalk – Demos

BEGGARS ARCHIVE/TOO PURE. CD/DL/LP

Sketchbook strangeness from the Wessex downlands.

2007's *White Chalk* found an increasingly dauntless Polly Harvey treading new ground, ditching raw electric rock for a daringly fragile chamber-folk sound. With songs built around her percussive, rudimentary piano vamps and delivered in a high, haunting vocal register, its bleak beauty and rural mystery recast Harvey as a gothic Dorset seer, summoning spirits both innocent and dark. Stripped of even the album's minimal decoration, these demos confirm that uncanniness was hard-wired into the songs, with every creak of the piano contributing to the spectral ambience. The spareness serves only to exacerbate the eerie, infant vulnerability of Grow, Grow, Grow, while When Under Ether almost evaporates into its amniotic reverb swirl, and the double-tracked voices on The Devil seem to be more about the evocation of possession than harmonic mellifluousness. Like much here, it's as starkly compelling as it is ineffably disquieting.

David Sheppard

Andy Irvine

★★★

Old Dog Long Road Vol. 2

AK-9. CD/DL

Rewarding ramble through the back pages of an Irish master.

Sweeney's Men, Planxty, Patrick Street, Mozaic… Andy Irvine's extensive CV encompasses so much of enduring significance in Irish music over the last half century it's easy to overlook what an informally masterful solo performer he has always been. Greater profile focuses on contemporaries like Christy Moore, but Irvine's intimate lyrical style, plaintive narratives and dexterous instrumentals make him a unique figure. This 23-track 2-CD set stretches back to 1961, and while the sound quality understandably varies, it monitors a fascinating journey from Woody Guthrie imitator to great ballads and tales of unsung heroes to jigs, reels and a beautiful blast of Greek music too. Mostly solo, it's less well trodden than *Vol. 1* and is better for it, whether featuring Chrysoula Kechagioglou on The Snows, singing with Planxty on a mesmerising live version of As I Roved Out, or his own 1969 take on You Fascists Bound To Lose. A classic troubadour.

Colin Irwin

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Sparks, Leon Bridges, Alice Coltrane, George Harrison, Gary Kemp, Martha Wainwright (pictured), Shannon & The Clams, Devendra Banhart, Little Steven, Willy Mason, Josienne Clarke, Karen Black, Juana Molina, Jackson Browne and more…

Gaëlle Leroyer

REISSUES EXTRA

Bricolage

★★★★

Bricolage

CREEPING BENT. CD/DL/LP

Sole 2009 LP by Glasgow art school quartet who split on single The Waltzers' release day (a sugary swirl of The La's and ELO). Produced by Altered Images' Stephen Lironi, wistful retro pop with skills to match smarts, ripe for rediscovery. *JB*

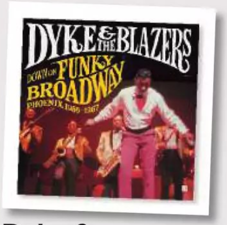
The Courettes

★★★★

Here We Are

DAMAGED GOODS. CD/DL/LP

Danish/Brazilian husband/wife, drums/guitar duo Martin and Flavia Couri make spit'n'snarl garage rumble-meets-Phil Spector pop. This compiles their first two LPs, showcasing their adrenalised crunch before a new LP in October. *JB*



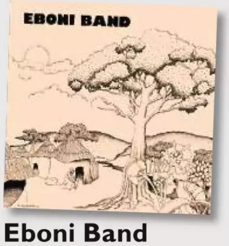
Dyke & The Blazers

★★★★

Down On Funky Broadway

CRAFT. DL/LP

Phoenix, AZ band fronted by brusque-voiced Arlester 'Dyke' Christian. Blistering, raw, 1966-67 funk. Full of extras, as is second set *I Got a Message: Hollywood (1968–1970)*. *GB*



Eboni Band

★★★

Eboni Band

WE ARE BUSY BODIES. DL/LP

This marriage of Motown and West Africa is intriguing in its potential but disappointing in reality. Five songs, produced by Art Stewart (Marvin Gaye, Rick James) with US and Ivory Coast musicians, range from generic party-time funk-disco (Sing A Happy Song) to lightly Afro-flavoured groovers. *CP*

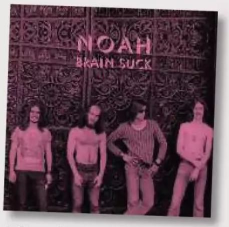
The Fall

★★★★

Are You Are Missing Winner

CHERRY RED/FALL SOUND ARCHIVE. CD/LP

It seemed like MES's jig was up when this scrappy, low-cost LP arrived in 2001. Instead, it was a re-boot, with garage attack, Leadbelly and Iggy covers and Troggs-sampling invoking livid chaos galore. Live shows beef up the 4-CD version. *IH*



Noah

★★★★

Brain Suck

GUERSSEN. CD/DL/LP

1972 heavy psych/prog concept LP from Salem, Ohio. Avocados Grumbled sets a tone of Sabbath-worthy future doom, whirling Hammond and lumbering riffs. Hard to tell what's sucking brains – drugs, aliens, The Man? – but it's scary in a good way. LP2 is pre-Noah garage as Sound Barrier. *JB*

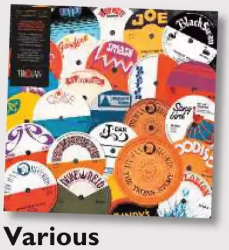
Rico

★★★★

Jama Rico

2-TONE. LP

In 1982, the veteran Jamaican trombonist ignored fashion and cut no-fooling, vintage-sounding jazzy-reggae and ska with Jamaican/British players including Tommy McCook, Sly & Robbie and various Specials. Remastered, as is 1981's *That Man Is Forward*, on heavy black wax. *IH*



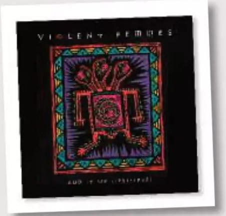
Various

★★★★★

The Trojan Story

BMG. CD/LP

Rights issues mean this isn't an exact replica of 1971's triple-LP label anthology: nine originals replaced, but there's two bonus cuts, and it remains an essential account of the ska wave, with hits from Dandy, The Maytals, Phyllis Dillon, Lee Perry et al. The original Trojan comp, and still the best. *KC*



Violent Femmes

★★★

Add It Up (1981-1993)

CRAFT RECORDINGS. DL/LP

Milwaukee pioneers' 1993 compilation now on double vinyl for the band's 40th anniversary. The carnal skiffle punk rush of 1983's debut and *Hallowed Ground's* proto alt-country are unimpeachable, though they were prone to whimsical diversion. *JB*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL

MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VERSATILE DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★	☆
MOJO CLASSIC	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DISAPPOINTING	BEST AVOIDED	DEPLORABLE

Spaced oddities: Super Furry Animals (from left) Dafydd Ieuan, Guto Pryce, Gruff Rhys, Huw Bunford, Cian Ciaran.

Redferns

Super Furry Animals

The tank-driving, melancholic-psychedelic-powerpop rave machine. By **Keith Cameron**.

AMONG THE MANY priceless Super Furry fables, perhaps most revealing is the one about Creation Records' Alan McGee checking out his label's potential new signings at a north London pub gig. He thought they were good but advised singing in English. Puzzled, the band replied that they already were.

Otherworldliness came naturally to Super Furry Animals. Mustered in early-'90s Cardiff, guitarist Huw 'Bunf' Bunford, drummer Dafydd Ieuan, bassist Guto Price and singer-guitarist Gruff Rhys were mainstays of a Welsh language scene unable to satisfy their restless ambition. Rhys and Ieuan's previous band, Ffa Coffi Pawb, released three albums on the Ankst label, thus learning the basics of recording technique, and once united with U Thant's Bunford and Price they formulated SFA's utopian design: classic rock and timeless melody reconditioned for the acid house generation. After two Ankst EPs in 1995, Ieuan's younger brother Cian Ciaran joined on keyboards to effect the quantum leap into Furryworld that was 1996's debut album *Fuzzy Logic*.

The band's pent-up anarchic energy and Creation's Oasis-enabled largesse made a happy marriage. Instead of music press adverts for the single If You Don't Want Me To Destroy You, they bought a tank, which parked up at festivals and blasted ear-bleed techno to boggle-eyed ravers. "We were too idiosyncratic for mass appeal," Gruff Rhys later considered, "but our theory was if people get bombarded with stuff, they'll accept anything."

A run of nine albums saw Super Furry Animals cavalierly surfing the trad/rad crosscurrents of their collective mind. Although *Rings Around The World*, a UK Number 3 and MOJO's 2001 Album Of The Year, was a commercial peak, every SFA record has something to reward seekers of the sacred meeting space between sad balladry and punk aggro, sunshine harmonies and extreme frequencies, psychedelic hedonism and militant politics – sometimes all in the same song. Since 2009's *Dark Days/Light Years*, the band has been dormant while Rhys concentrates on solo work, though 2016 saw them touring behind the *Zoom!* best-of and *Fuzzy Logic*'s 20th anniversary reissue. In 2020, SFA minus Rhys released a single under the name Das Koolies. All would surely agree, however, that the world is a poorer place for the absence of Furryvision.

And the tank? Sold to Don Henley, who had it shipped to Texas. Now that's fuzzy logic for you.

> "We were too idiosyncratic for mass appeal."
> GRUFF RHYS

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Super Furry Animals LPs. Next month we want your KEVIN COYNE Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Kevin Coyne'. We'll print the best comments.

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
Love Kraft

10 Super Furry Animals
Love Kraft

EPIC, 2005

You say: "*Love Kraft* is underrated and an amazing display of SFA's talents." Mark Green, Twitter

Released in the band's 10th anniversary year, *Love Kraft* ostensibly signalled a retreat into tradition. Opener Zoom refracted The Needle And The Damage Done into a chooggling choral lament for the apocalypse. Perhaps significantly, *Love Kraft* opened up the lead vocal booth to all-comers (Rhys' solo debut came out earlier the same year), with Dafydd Ieuan's Atomik Lust positing a stoned union of The Beach Boys' Feel Flows and Mott The Hoople knees-up, all the better to "Get our shit together". Lazer Beam, meanwhile, recorded in Spain and mixed in Brazil with producer Mario Caldato Jr, was pure Furry fiesta: a rhythmic booty call to vaporise "imperial colonial bastards."

4 Super Furry Animals Mwng

PLACID CASUAL, 2000

You say: "Highest selling Welsh language album of all time! Beautiful and mind-boggling at once." Michael Scarlett via mojo4music.com

It's a very Super Furry Animals thing that the album which least resembles their popularly recognised sound is actually closest to the band's root source. Recorded mostly live, *Mwng* dispensed with the hyper-ventilatory input overload of the preceding year's *Guerrilla* and circled the Furrywagons around core values. Entirely Welsh-sung, mostly mid-tempo, full of rustic melancholy beatitudes, with some lovely brass (Y Gwyneb Lau), the occasional burst of backporch glam skronk (Ysbeidiau Heulog), it features two instructive covers: Y Teimlad, by '80s Welsh language scene pioneers Datblygu, and Dacw Hi, written by Rhys for his previous band Ffa Coffi Pawb and yet definitively Furry.

GRUFF RHYS AMERICAN INTERIOR

9 Gruff Rhys American Interior

TURNSTILE, 2014

You say: "Not just a beautiful album, Gruff also expanded the concept to include a great book and a film." Sarah Stevens, via e-mail

As anyone who's witnessed the band in a creative setting can attest, Super Furry Animals functioned on strictly democratic lines, with even minor decisions requiring collective agreement. Maybe this partly explains Gruff Rhys' current preference for working solo. None of his albums will disappoint SFA fans, but the best entry points are 2011's *Hotel Shampoo* – a miniature jukebox refreshment of familiar Furry tropes – or this conceptual travelogue based on 18th century explorer John Evans, a distant relative of Rhys', and his obsession with a mythical tribe of Welsh-speaking native Americans. Its blend of cosmic frontier epic and downhome whimsy is profoundly moving.

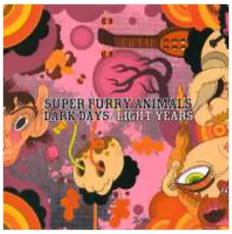
Phantom Power
Super Furry Animals

8 Super Furry Animals Phantom Power

EPIC, 2003

You say: "The Welsh wonders have had so many amazing albums but *Phantom Power* has the Number 1 SFA song – Slow Life." Andrew Wilkie, Facebook

Phantom Power maintained *Rings Around The World*'s future-facing stance – released as a DVD, it had a remix companion, *Phantom Phorce* – while tempering its predecessor's hyper-activity. There's no shortage of action, however, with an air of latter-day Clash or The Beat in the globalist outreach of The Undefeated and Valet Parking ("The Eurozone is my home"), while much of the rest suggests a Western odyssey without a map, be it the punkoid Out Of Control calling out post-9/11 US aggression or the turbo-Canned Heat silliness of Golden Retriever. The closing Slow Life is peak techno-Americana from the originators of the form.



7 Super Furry Animals Dark Days/Light Years

ROUGH TRADE, 2009

You say: "Their last album to date is easily their best post-Creation LP. Inaugural Trams shows they can write a great song about literally anything, The Very Best Of Neil Diamond insanely catchy." Eddie Robson, via e-mail

If *Dark Days/Light Years* really is the final Super Furry Animals LP, it represents both a riotous return to form and a worthy adieu. From opener Crazy Naked Girls' nu-P-Funk freakery to Inaugural Trams – effectively Autobahn updated for MittelEuropean urban transit systems with a Deutsche rap from Franz Ferdinand's Nick McCarthy – through the Isleys punch of Bunf's White Socks/Flip Flops, this was a band re-energised by the power of groove. Emblematic of a canon defined by absurdist wisdom, only SFA could deliver a song called The Very Best Of Neil Diamond that lives up to its title.

ZOOM! THE BEST OF
SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
1995-2016

6 Super Furry Animals Zoom! The Best Of 1995-2016

BMG, 2016

You say: "The best band in the world, bar none! Every album is an absolute winner! I'm going with *The Best Of…*!" Stephen Parry, Facebook

While SFA's grand conceptual visions suit the LP format, their ever-twitchy pop antennae also make for a great singles band, a fact acknowledged early on with 1998's *Out Spaced*, which cherry-picked the Ankst EPs, Creation B-sides and legendary Steely Dan-sampling epic set-closer The Man Don't Give A Fuck. With 37 tracks, *Zoom!* is a comprehensive taster and an essential companion-piece, including every single, some reasonably deep cuts, the standouts from 2007's spotty *Hey! Venus*, and Bing Bong, the last SFA release to date – a maverick anthem for the Wales football team's 2016 European Championship campaign.

5 Super Furry Animals Guerrilla

CREATION, 1999

You say: "*Guerrilla* is a band embracing their identify before a succession of momentum-sapping hiatuses." Phil Lewis via mojo4music.com

With its sampler rampages and sonic density, *Guerrilla* proved the value of recording at hi-spec Real World: a sprawl of yob-pop (The Teacher; Do Or Die), instrumental miniatures (The Sound Of Life Today) and lachrymose sing-alongs (The Turning Tide; Fire In My Heart), simultaneously pitching at pop disposability and thematic cohesion. The chattering bleep mesh of Wherever I Lay My Phone (That's My Home) is a song that's more prescient by the day, while Chewing Chewing Gum is surrealist SFA wisdom at its most immaculately stoned. Collapso-calypso gem Northern Lites remains their highest charting single – unlucky Number 11.

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
FUZZY LOGIC

3 Super Furry Animals Fuzzy Logic

CREATION, 1996

You say: "One of the best debut albums ever and still sounds fantastic today." Dan Wolff, Twitter

Although the Furries enjoyed recording a debut amid the luxury of Rockfield Studios, they later admitted to feeling uncomfortable in an environment far removed from previous experience (and possibly tainted by association with Britpop) despite the continued presence of production mentor Gorwel Owen. Yet *Fuzzy Logic* offered a fully-formed universe without an obvious precedent, a psych-pop wonderland stuffed with arcane characters like Hometown Unicorn's alien abductee Franckie Fontaine or Welsh drug smuggler Howard Marks, with walk-ons for Kevin Ayers' wind ensemble Wizards Of Twiddly and actor Rhys Ifans, who sang in an early SFA incarnation. Everything to come can be traced back here.

Super furry animals
RINGS AROUND THE WORLD

2 Super Furry Animals Rings Around The World

EPIC, 2001

You say: "Startling in scope and ambition, capturing one of those times when a band can try anything and it works." Andy Horseman, Facebook

The Furries followed their self-released unadorned Welsh-language album by signing to a major and making a multi-layered epic in 5.1 Surround Sound with accompanying films for each track. There was an actual kitchen sink on *Fuzzy Logic*, but *Rings Around The World* is Super Furry Animals' maximalist masterpiece, their electronica roots pulsing through symphonic pop grandiosity worthy of Queen. The material was suitably stellar: a title track upholding the premise that ELO were the band The Beatles could have been; Juxtapozed With U's plastic-soul slink; best of all, Receptacle For The Respectable, a demented four-part song suite featuring Paul McCartney eating a carrot.

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
RADIATOR

1 Super Furry Animals Radiator

CREATION, 1997

You say: "Their masterpiece… Pop, prog, techno, folk, Krautrock, and usually during one song. I'm not one for 'funny' lyrics but the line 'Marie Curie was Polish born but French bred. Ha! French Bread!' always raises a smile." Gary Page, Facebook

Recorded at Gorwel Owen's tiny home studio in Anglesey, *Radiator* is significant on several levels. The first SFA album to feature the monsterist art of Pete Fowler, it's also the first with full creative input from keyboardist Cian Ciaran. His Fender Rhodes is all over a set broadly dividing into a manic first half (including Hermann Loves Pauline's lockstep pop frenzy) and a melancholic second, concluding with the remarkable Mountain People, a country rock lament for indigenous Welsh culture, with lyrics inspired by Harold Pinter's play Mountain Language, that eventually degrades into atonal techno. In 2017, on its 20th anniversary reissue, Guto Pryce declared *Radiator*, "a graphic, animated, fantastical record. We were creating our world instead of the world being thrust upon us." In the entire Furry-verse, there is no finer place to visit.

NOW DIG THIS

Recently-released *Seeking New Gods* is the seventh Gruff Rhys album, yet all his erstwhile bandmates enjoy extracurricular activity too. Cian Ciaran has four albums under his own name, and together with Dafydd Ieuan has composed several TV soundtracks, winning a BAFTA Cymru award in 2011. Ieuan is a member of The Peth, fronted by former SFA singer Rhys Ifans and including Guto Pryce, and has also released two LPs in The Earth, featuring Catatonia guitarist Mark Roberts. Pryce is one half of Gulp, alongside his partner Lindsay Leven, the couple releasing two albums of cinematic dreampop. Huw Bunford, meanwhile, was in Pale Blue Dots and has composed music for films. In 2020, SFA *sans* Gruff released the debut Das Koolies single, It's All About The Dolphins.

GULP
ALL GOOD WISHES

You gotta let me know: Ellen Foley with Micky Jones.

Flying colours

This month's neglected pearl: Meat Loaf's duet partner meets The Clash in London N5.

Ellen Foley

Spirit Of St. Louis

CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL/EPIC, 1981

BORN IN Missouri but toughened up in New York's rock and theatre scenes, Ellen Foley was already a familiar voice in 1981. She'd duetted with Meat Loaf on Paradise By The Dashboard Light on *Bat Out Of Hell* in 1977; thereafter, Ian Hunter and Mick Ronson produced 1979's solo debut *Nightout*, promoted to UK viewers with a subversive performance of The Rolling Stones' Stupid Girl, in the company of musclemen and swimsuit models, on Kenny Everett's TV show. But in February 1980, Foley had a fateful meeting with Mick Jones at London's Venue. Romance bloomed, setting off a chain of events that led to The Clash backing her on, and the Jones/Joe Strummer team writing for, her follow-up *Spirit Of St. Louis*.

"[Mick and I] lived in New York and London to split up the time," recalls Foley today. "It was time for me to make a record, and he wanted to make a record with me, and he brought the band in. They didn't seem to object and it came about sort of naturally."

Recording took place in August 1980 at Wessex Studios, where The Clash were completing their triple-LP *Sandinista!* Foley duetted with Jones on that record's 45 Hitsville UK, and recalls a porous approach to recording the two albums.

"It was a pretty long process," she says. "But they were very organised, and it was a nice atmosphere. Mick, Paul and Topper did all the basic tracks and then everyone else [various Blockheads and Strummer's fiddling pal Tymon Dogg] came in. It was very organic and improvisational. Joe wasn't actually involved in the record, but he was around, and we talked. He was very sensitive, and respectful. I think Joe was probably a feminist. Because I thought he was so brilliant, I'd go along with what he was writing. He created incredible stories for me to tell. I can't see him doing a lot of these songs."

While the guitar-bass-drums bedrock of the record is recognisably The Clash, the six Strummer/Jones originals reveal different aspects of the mothership, channelling an idea of the female anima in songs which recall such tender Clash songs as Midnight To Stevens, Death Is A Star or Train In Vain. With Foley's barnstorming rock voice tempered into a croon, opener The Shuttered Palace is a lilting Hellenic ballad sung by a courtesan – Clash consigliere Kosmo Vinyl did Greek dancing on the video – while Foley brings her theatrical experience to the fantastical The Death Of The Psychoanalyst Of Salvador Dali, where images of Gene Vincent's rusted cufflinks and policemen "begging for soup" emblemise surrealist breakdown. Foley also praises tranquillised housewife vignette Theatre Of Cruelty, petroleum rocker M.P.H. and execution bolero In The Killing Hour, but says, "my favourite song on the album is Torchlight. Mick and I were singing together. It's about people who are lovers – much as hate that I word – and it was about a real resilience. It had a great uptempo, positive feel, it's romantic [like] Train In Vain was incredibly romantic… he had it in him."

She recalls, affectionately, that Jones was unused to writing for anyone other than Strummer, and requests for a different key were met with "'Whaddya mean?!'… there were always things between Joe and Mick, the way there are between any songwriting marriage. A real grounding force on my record, and *Sandinista!*, was Bill Price, the engineer and, really, the producer. He was the calm head."

Of the other six titles, a charged cover of Edith Piaf favourite My Legionnaire gives a novel twist to The Clash's combat obsessions, though Foley is less admiring of songs written by Tymon Dogg, noting, "I didn't find him to be a great part of the experience." (Of his Game Of A Man she pithily observes, "WTF?")

She admits to other ambivalences about the album, saying, "I'm not sure that I feel powerful within it. I was intimidated. I thought I was mature. I'd done theatre and Broadway and television and the Meat Loaf thing, being powerful for a young girl, and then maybe it fell apart a little bit. Things are very 'madame,' as they say in fashion, when they should be very, 'Fuck You!' I was a bit out of my element."

With a hometown-referencing title, after the monoplane piloted by Charles Lindbergh for the first transatlantic flight, the album was released in March 1981. Peaking at UK Number 57, and a modest hit in the Netherlands, it reached 152, for two weeks, in the US. "We set out to make a modern cabaret record," she says now. "But it was too weird. If it had been for my fourth album, it would have been great."

Around this time Foley was also filmed alongside The Clash playing "street scum" in Martin Scorsese's The King Of Comedy. "We were standing in front of [legendary Times Square store] Colony Records," she laughs. "We spent the day yelling at Robert De Niro. That was fun!" She would also appear on Clash farewell *Combat Rock* in 1982, but split with Jones in the summer of that year. Is The Clash's Should I Stay Or Should I Go about her, as legend claims? "I don't know," she says. "Full stop!"

Foley's later credits included Joe Jackson's *Body And Soul*, Jim Steinman's Pandora's Box project and doing the vocal arrangement for Bonnie Tyler's Holding Out For A Hero. On-screen, she appeared in Tootsie, Fatal Attraction, Married To The Mob and numerous US TV shows. Now, new LP *Fighting Words* gets back to her rock'n'roll roots: on seize-the-day lead track I'm Just Happy To Be Here she duets with Karla DeVito, who lip-sync'd Foley's powerhouse vocals on the Paradise By The Dashboard Light video.

Ultimately, she's at peace with *Spirit Of St. Louis*. "It's such a beautiful sounding record," she says. "Incredible musically, the songs, the instrumentation and the risks that were taken. There's a real maturity to it. You know what? It was a fabulous thing to do, and I really wish people would hear it again."

Ian Harrison

Fighting Words is out on August 6 on Urban Noise.

Ellen Foley

> "We set out to make a modern cabaret record..."
> ELLEN FOLEY

CREDITS

Tracks: The Shuttered Palace / Torchlight / Beautiful Waste Of Time / The Death Of The Psychoanalyst Of Salvador Dali / M.P.H. / My Legionnaire / Theatre Of Cruelty / How Glad I Am / Phases Of Travel / Game Of A Man / Indestructible / In The Killing Hour

Personnel: Ellen Foley (vcls), Mick Jones (vcls, gtr), Joe Strummer, John Turnbull (gtrs), Paul Simonon, Norman Watt-Roy (bs), Topper Headon (drms), Mickey Gallagher (keybds), Davey Payne (sax), Tymon Dogg (violin).

Producer: Mick Jones with Bill Price (engineer, mixing), Jeremy Green (assistant engineer)

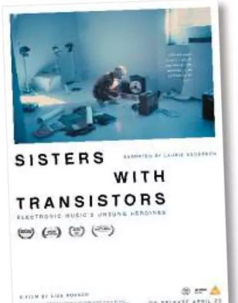
Released: March 1981

Recorded: Wessex Studios, north London

Chart peak: 57 (UK), 152 (US)

Current availability: Lemon/Cherry Red CD (with *Nightout*)

©Adrian Boot/urbanimage.tv



Sisters With Transistors

★★★★

Dir: Lisa Rovner

MODERN FILMS. C/ST

A film celebrating the unsung heroines of electronic music.

"Composers were traditionally old, dead white men – but electronic music gave you the freedom to define any world you wanted," says Laurie Spiegel, the New York composer whose 1986 Music Mouse instrument was one of the earliest forms of music software. Along with artists like Delia Derbyshire in the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Pauline Oliveros at the 1960s San Francisco Tape Music Centre, and Éliane Radigue, who studied *musique concrète* with Pierre Schaeffer before creating her own beautiful analogue synth-scapes, Spiegel was a vital part of the evolution of electronic music. This film, narrated by Laurie Anderson with rare archive footage, in-depth interviews and experimental sonic textures, is like an extended meditation on those pioneers. One of the most memorable scenes features Daphne Oram painting on filmstrip and coming up with a prototype for MIDI. One to watch again and again.

Lucy O'Brien

Last Man Standing

★★★★

Dir: Nick Broomfield

DOGWOOOF. C/ST

Sequel to 2002's Biggie & Tupac sets its sights on Death Row mogul Suge Knight.

LAST MAN STANDING

A more stringent dig into the tangled web that claimed the lives of two of hip-hop's most mesmeric stars, Last Man Standing dissects the doomed brotherhood between 2Pac and Suge Knight with fearless scrutiny. A grim portrait of the intimidating Knight – a label executive in name alone – it shows how Death Row's devastating trail of gang violence ("We'd whup your ass with no questions asked," says an enabler) was compounded by the collusion of a network of bent LAPD officers. Tongues freed by Knight's waning hold and lengthy incarceration, the insider revelations quickly pile up, offering a highly compelling argument for murders that remain officially unsolved. Tight, concise and mercifully free of the bungles and dead ends that marred its predecessor, it's gripping viewing and one of Broomfield's best.

Andy Cowan

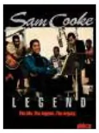
Sam Cooke: Legend

★★★★

Dir: Mary Wharton

ABKCO. DVD/ST

Out of print since 2003, now massively expanded screen time, plus 3,000-word note.



When he transitioned from gospel sensation to international pop star, Sam Cooke never lost the holy spirit and thus helped create soul music. Written by his biographer Peter Guralnick, this documentary examines his singularity: matinee looks, deep intelligence, songwriting chops, business savvy and that gritty yet silken voice. From church to chitlin' circuit, supper clubs to concert halls, he was haunted by tragedies and segregation, but remained determined. (He insisted on integrated audiences and demanded respect from law enforcement – and got it.) After influencing '60s rockers, he was influenced by them, culminating in the Dylan-inspired A Change Is Gonna Come. This is a no-frills tribute: talking heads, narration, footage, music. Lloyd Price, Bobby Womack, Andrew Loog Oldham and a charming, very funny Aretha Franklin all talk Sam and, along with charismatic performances and classic songs, carry the story until its devastating end with his shooting in 1964.

Michael Simmons

Summer Of Soul

★★★★★

Dir: Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES. C/ST

Footage of 1969's Harlem Cultural Festival aired at last – it's been worth the wait.

SUMMER OF SOUL

Opening with Stevie Wonder's thunderous Drum Solo is a sign that what follows will be transcendent. Shot at 1969's Harlem Cultural Festival – often called "the Black Woodstock" and here subtitled "Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised" – this masterpiece is the urban equivalent of that other 1960s landmark. In his directorial debut, musician Questlove has created an unequalled ode to the wildly eclectic black music of the era. His editing is brisk, but subtly nuanced. To see David Ruffin, Gladys Knight & The Pips (soul), Sly & The Family Stone (funk), B.B. King (blues), The Staple Singers (gospel), Abbey Lincoln/Max Roach (jazz) and more in their prime is a joy. Other highlights are Mavis Staples and Mahalia Jackson duetting and the regal, radiant Nina Simone on her A-game. That this footage could get no buyers for a half-century is maddening. Attendees are shown while watching the footage now, weeping for joy and perhaps a dream deferred.

Michael Simmons

Dale Barclay
All On Black

Dale Barclay: All On Black

★★★

Dir: Billy Hill

BBC IPLAYER. ST

Profile of the Amazing Snakeheads frontman who died of brain cancer in 2018.

As Fat White Family's Lias Saoudi and Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos testify here, Glasgow's Dale Barclay brought genuine menace to the Amazing Snakeheads, his clench-jawed charisma earmarking them for great, outsider rock'n'roll things circa their 2014 Domino debut, *Amphetamine Ballads*. Barclay had hoped to wear a cape for a crucial Jools Holland's Later… slot, but that didn't happen thanks to the original Snakehead trio's messy implosion, and it was after moving to East Berlin and forming new gang And Yet It Moves that he began having seizures. Hill's touching film – "You think I'm young? You've not met the three-year-old that's got it," Barclay told wife/collaborator Laura when diagnosed with a grade 4 glioblastoma – cedes energy to a clichéd voiceover, but its subject's courage and magnetism shine throughout. "Everything should end in a hail of bullets," Barclay joked pre-illness, screenwriting his grand finale. Sadly prophetic. He died aged just 32.

James McNair

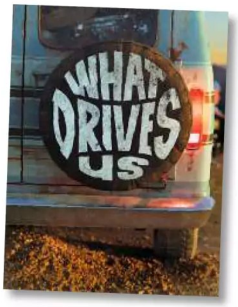
What Drives Us

★★★★

Dir: Dave Grohl

AMAZON PRIME VIDEO. ST

The Foo Fighters corral rock royalty to deliver a love letter to life on the road.

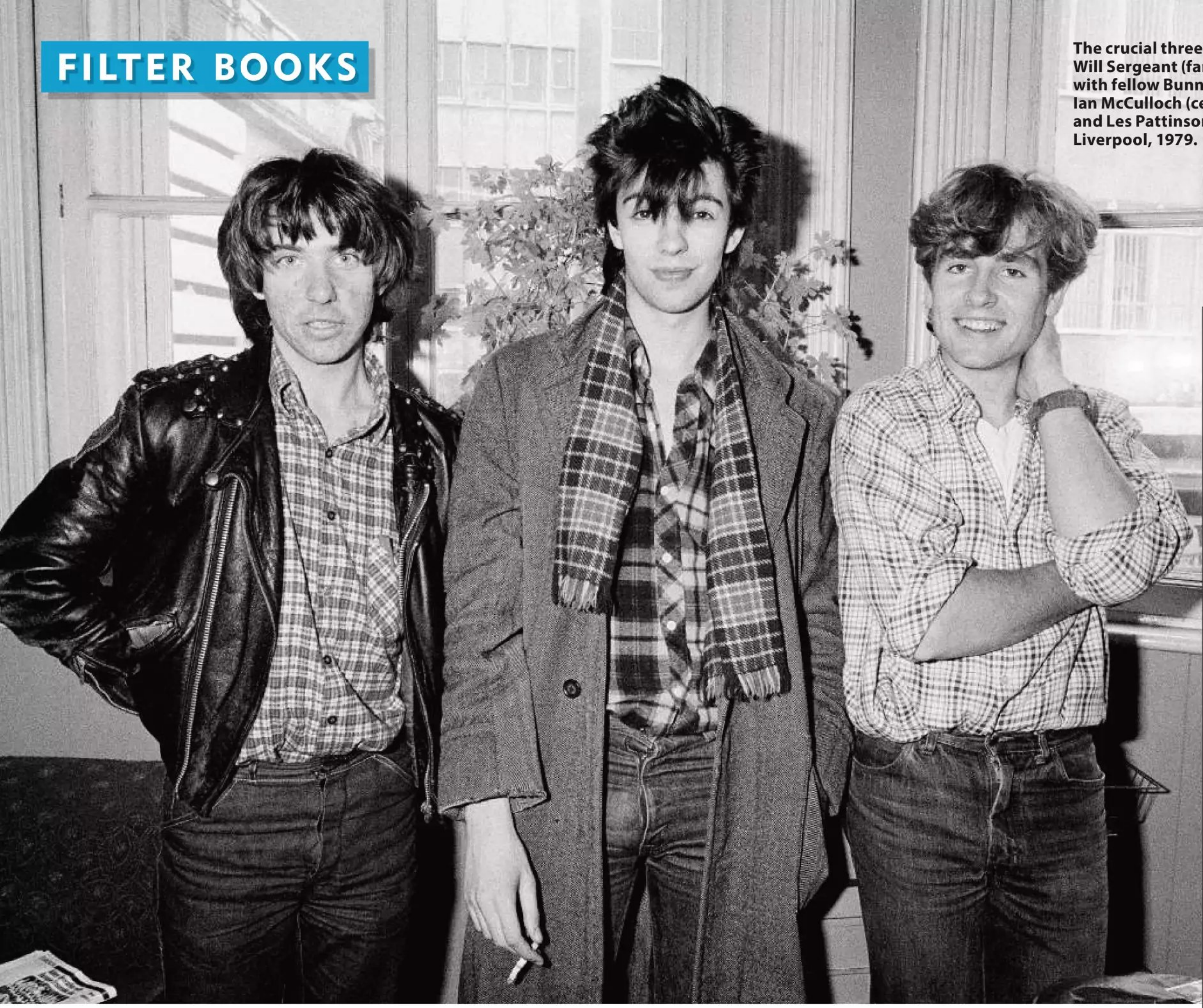


It wouldn't be a mistake to interpret this Dave Grohl-directed documentary's title literally. Across 90 minutes, the Foo Fighters talisman is joined by an impressive array of guests – including U2's The Edge, St. Vincent and AC/DC's Brian Johnson – to reflect on their formative years touring in vans, before limos and jets. Covering everything from the Tetris-like logistics of packing to the ethics of tooting in confined spaces ("If you fart, admit it," Ringo Starr decrees), there's an intoxicating blend of passion and humour throughout. What truly elevates it, however, is how Grohl uses such stories to also interrogate the nature of artistic ambition and the obstacles it must navigate, with Dead Kennedys drummer DH Peligro's harrowing battle with addiction standing out as particularly raw and poignant. It's but one example of how this (ahem) van-ity project becomes a vehicle for something much more powerful.

George Garner

The composed Daphne Oram, an innovative sister withy transistors.

©npg



The crucial three: Will Sergeant (far left) with fellow Bunnymen Ian McCulloch (centre) and Les Pattinson, Liverpool, 1979.

Caught by the fuzz

Echo And The Bunnymen's spirit guardian tells his story. By **Keith Cameron**.

Bunnyman

★★★★

Will Sergeant

CONSTABLE. £20

EVERY GREAT band needs a conscience, an arbiter for what is or isn't permissible along the way. In Echo And The Bunnymen, that role fell to Will Sergeant, architect of elemental rock guitar and self-confessed natural cynic. It was Sergeant who walked out of a band meeting disgusted that Dave Balfe had added keyboards to The Cutter, Sergeant who curtly dismissed prospective producer Steve Lillywhite, and Sergeant who even as he sent copies of the band's debut single to fans worried that the recipients might be unworthy. "I want to vet every record sale," he says, "like the RSPCA check out if a puppy is going to a good home."

Only the last of these episodes appears in this memoir. Bunnyman ends with the band about to sign with Warners, having just invited Pete De Freitas to replace Sergeant's Mini Pops Junior drum machine. Ian McCulloch doesn't appear until page 199. Anyone expecting a rabbit's-mouth account of the mystical trek from post-punk scuzz to Royal Albert Hall grandeur, via tours mapped on ley lines and a four-album run of incomparable brilliance, then onward through split, tragedy and reunion, to today's uneasy marriage of convenience between Sergeant and McCulloch, will be disappointed. Until they read the book, that is. For with his dry, droll, vivid storytelling, Will Sergeant makes very clear the factors that shaped him, and therefore his band, into such a unique force.

When Echo And The Bunnymen released their debut single in May 1979, their 21-year-old guitarist was a commis chef at Binns, a Liverpool department store whose cottage pie recipe was never going to win a Michelin star. Sergeant details Binns' kitchen secrets with the same grim relish he applies to a childhood scarred by acne and a dismal, sometimes violent, home life on a council estate in Melling, a Lancashire village on Liverpool's northern edge. At 13, his mother walks out, shortly after his elder siblings, leaving Will alone with his misanthropic father ("a very complicated chap," he says, charitably). School is an archetypal low-prospect secondary modern, where music provides blessed respite. In a final year English lesson, he plays his class a Velvet Underground album, only to be pelted with missiles when Venus In Furs comes on, then is reproached by his teacher, Mr Corcoran, for cribbing the sleevenotes. ("I thought it sounded much too eloquent for you. See me later.")

Only at Eric's, the fetid basement punk club on Liverpool's Mathew Street, does Sergeant truly find a refuge, accepted by fellow outsiders including friends Paul Simpson and Les Pattinson, plus a coterie of future legends: Holly Johnson, Jayne Casey, Pete Burns, Julian Cope, and 'Macul', who he'll invite to Melling to "mess about with guitars". Sergeant sharply evokes the neurotic importance of music and clothes, his relief at seeing light after so much darkness especially palpable in the aftermath of his new band's first gig: "I am no longer just the kid that looks like a secret member of the Ramones… Willy Ramone, the spotty one they keep in the attic of CBGBs."

Having tee'd it up, it would be perverse for Will Sergeant not to write a sequel. Yet his favourite band are San Francisco mysterions The Residents, who taught him "The legend is often better than reality." Ending the story where most people might expect it to begin would be a very Bunnyman thing to do.

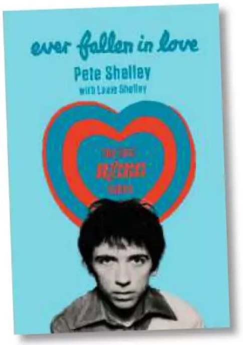
> "Only at Eric's does he truly find a refuge."

WILL SERGEANT
BUNNYMAN

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Will Sergeant saw his first gig on May 13, 1972, at Liverpool Stadium. Along with mates Dave and Steve Mazenko and Steve's girlfriend Pauline ("head to toe in cheesecloth and denim"), they see Status Quo supporting Slade. Other key Stadium gigs include Dr Feelgood and Sensational Alex Harvey Band.
- The Bunnymen's music press debut was an early 1979 Sounds writers' chart, where Andy Courtney cited a "private tape" song called World Shut Your Mouth. The Bunnymen had no such song and had recorded no such tape. Years later, Julian Cope used the title for a song of his own.
- Arriving for a gig in Leeds to find a Mini blocking the club's load-in entrance, the Bunnymen bounce the car down the street. They later discover it belongs to Annie Lennox, lead singer of gig headliners The Tourists. "Annie Lennox in full kill-the-Sassenachs mode is best avoided," says Will.

Paul Slattery



Ever Fallen In Love: The Lost Buzzcocks Tapes

★★★

Pete Shelley with Louie Shelley

OCTOPUS. £20

Song-by-song insights into the Buzzcocks' late '70s albums, plus much more.

Plans for Buzzcocks frontman Pete Shelley to publish a memoir would come to nothing – until, following the singer's untimely death in 2018, super-fan Louie (no relation) began shaping the numerous taped conversations she'd had with him into this fascinating tome. An interview here with Pete's cousin reveals the Buzzcock's interest in cosmology and 'big questions' dated back to his Lancashire schooldays. Yet the lasting impression from Shelley's own analysis of his songs is not of the depth of meaning behind them, but the amount of old-fashioned craft – and off-beat humour – that fed into them. The bleak, existentialist gem Something's Gone Wrong Again, for example, began life as a "jokey" creation, part-inspired by Northern comedian Hylda Baker's routine about a faulty watch and, yes, 'Cocks' first frontman Howard Devoto missing a bus. Ultimately, the strange genius of Shelley remains comfortingly shrouded in mystery.

Pat Gilbert

Shiny And New

★★★★

Dylan Jones

WHITE RABBIT. £20

Essays on 10 singles "of pop genius that defined the '80s".

Dylan Jones
Shiny New

GQ editor Dylan Jones has already explored the 1980s in two previous books centred on Live Aid and the new romantics, but his fascination for the era clearly remains undiminished and here he further sets out to harness the musical and cultural ambitions of the decade. Rapper's Delight and Fight The Power bookend the tales of Ghost Town, Blue Monday and Theme From S'Express, as the action generally flits between London and New York. Jones manages to inject interesting analysis into oft familiar stories – viewing The Smiths circa Bigmouth Strikes Again as "the antithesis of the decade, which meant they became forever associated with it". Best though are his auto-biographical narratives – experiencing the Brixton riots; being razored by thugs in Islington in '81 while dressed like a cut-price Martin Fry – and, overall, it's a wholly successful endeavour carried along by his waves of infectious enthusiasm.

Tom Doyle

Permanent Damage: Memoirs Of An Outrageous Girl

★★★★

Mercy Fontenot with Lyndsey Parker

RARE BIRD. £19

Memoir from Miss Mercy of Zappa's GTOs, written just before her death in 2020.

Great writing; wild stories, but *very* dark. None of the sweetness of fellow GTO/best friend Pamela Des Barres' I'm With The Band. But Miss Pamela loved sex and rock'n'roll, while Miss Mercy loved drugs. Leaving home for San Francisco in the '60s, aged 15, she was on acid when she overheard Charles Manson talk about a "race war". She was with Janis's heroin dealer on the day that Joplin died. The (pervy) night she spent with Chuck Berry, she was so high she didn't know if they'd had sex; they did. Moving to Los Angeles, she encountered many of the greats of rock, soul and R&B. She was married for a while to Shuggie Otis and they had a son. Her second husband, a fellow crackhead, broke every bone in her face. She details other beatings from other men and a slew of rapes. But through all of it Mercy emerged undaunted. "We were one of the first female groups to break through the barriers," she says. "We hung with rock stars on their turf, and it was *our* turf too."

Sylvie Simmons

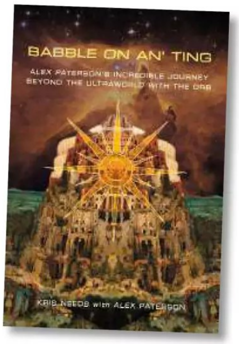
Babble On An' Ting

★★★★

Kris Needs with Alex Paterson

OMNIBUS. £16.99

Inside-track saga of The Orb, '90s ambient-house giants.


BABBLE ON AN' TING
ALEX PATERSON'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY BEYOND THE ULTRAWORLD WITH THE ORB
KRIS NEEDS with ALEX PATERSON

Needs, later of this parish but then editing ZigZag, first encountered Paterson circa 1980 as Killing Joke's drum roadie, and their paths frequently intertwined over the ensuing 40 years, from squats shared with proto-Orb sidekick Youth, through a shared passion for early electro, to shadowy renown as punk-inspired dance mavericks. A distant cousin of snooker's Ronnie O'Sullivan, 'Dr' Alex had a rough childhood: after losing his father aged three, his mum packed him off to boarding school where bullying was institutional. There, he shielded Youth, two years his junior, and the duo's anger-fuelled passage through Killing Joke (Paterson voiced Bodies in gig encores), NYC electro fanaticism and the incestuous KLF-Orb crowd's unhinged first steps is meticulously narrated. Success with *Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld* and Primal Scream's Higher Than The Sun, both in 1991, brought only fleeting joy as dodgy management and label pressures snuffed Paterson's creative juju. His post-millennial re-emergence feels like a triumph for a visionary of warmth and humility.

Andrew Perry

You Are Beautiful And You Are Alone

★★★★

Jennifer Otter Bickerdike

FABER. £20

Vivid reframing of Nico's life and legacy, from Warhol's Factory to Prestwich's pubs.

Sometimes truculent, often uncompromising, Nico was not an easy person to know, and Jennifer Otter Bickerdike does not shy away from exploring the difficult sides to her character in this biography. But it's also a compassionate portrayal of a musician whose artistry has often been overlooked, a woman who channelled horrific childhood experiences of war-blasted Berlin into a kind of sonic poetry. Otter Bickerdike captures her La Dolce Vita period and the vividness of the 1960s Factory scene in New York, interviewing pivotal figures such as John Cale and Danny Fields. But most compelling is the research into the Manchester years, where long after Nico had been abandoned by the Warhol contingent, she found acceptance. Here, the dry Mancunian wit and loyalty of musicians like Peter Hook, and James Young, the piano player in her band from 1981-86, really shines through brightly.

Lucy O'Brien

The Chameleon Poet: Bob Dylan's Search For Self

★★★★

John Bauldie

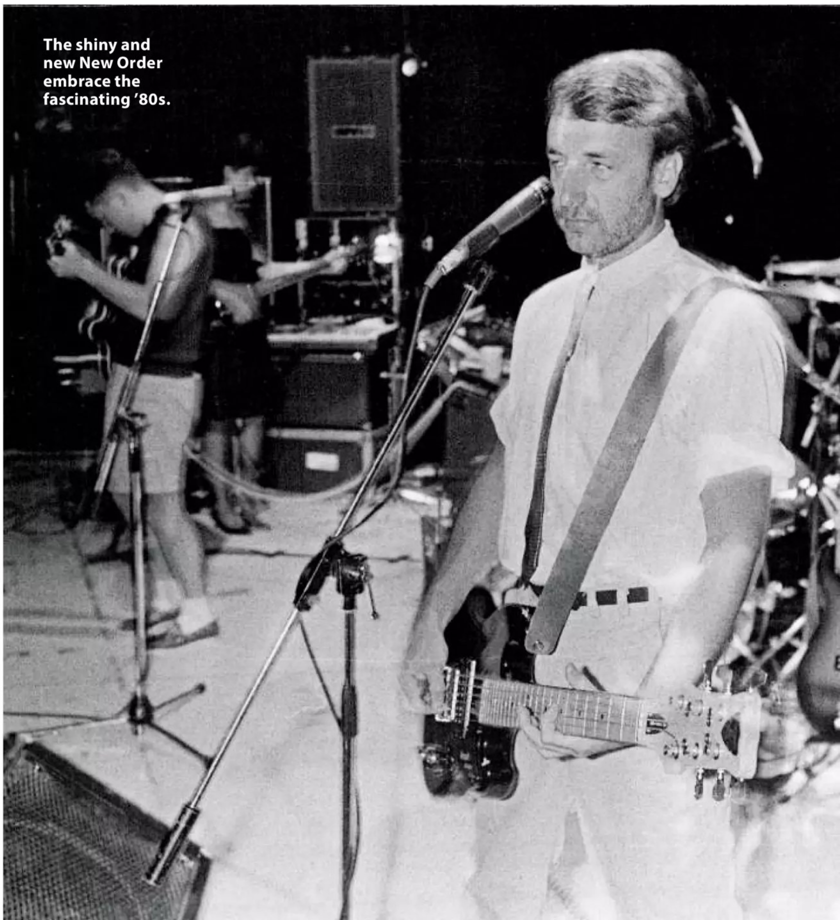
ROUTE. £20

Late Dean of Dylanology's unpublished gem of lyrical crit is off the presses at last.

THE CHAMELEON POET
JOHN BAULDIE

John Bauldie edited crucial Bobzine The Telegraph, wrote the Grammy-nominated sleevenote to the first *Bootleg Series* set and bossed the subs' desk at Q magazine until 1996, the year he tragically passed in the helicopter crash that killed Chelsea FC vice-chairman and fellow Bobcat Matthew Harding. Bolton fan Bauldie was also an English lecturer and his rigour, lightly worn, shoots out of every line of this pithy exploration of Dylan's pre-conversion songs, identifying the ways the artist Robert Zimmerman and the personas of Bob Dylan diverge and intersect, while storms rage (there are lots of storms in Dylan songs) and spectres of Rimbaud, Brecht and King Lear circle. Bauldie's take feels before-its-time (the manuscript dates from 1978-80), breaking down the walls between phases that even Dylan fans like to erect, and tracing Dylan's consistent posing of a question anyone can relate to: who the hell am I, and why am I doing this?

Danny Eccleston



The shiny and new New Order embrace the fascinating '80s.

Getty

Lawdy Mr Price: Lloyd, a rock'n'roll leader.

Mr Personality

Lloyd Price, Lawdy Miss Clawdy and Stagger Lee R&B hitmaker, left us on May 3.

SOME YEARS before the seismic event that was Little Richard's rock'n'roll eruption with Tutti Frutti, music's tectonic plates had been shifting down in New Orleans. There, the heavy swing and vocal strength of 1952's Lawdy Miss Clawdy made Lloyd Price's collision of blues and R&B a strong early rival to Fats Domino.

That US R&B Number 1 was the forerunner to an extraordinarily varied career, both in music and outside. Price, who was born in Kenner, Louisiana in 1933, broadened and adapted his songwriting throughout the '50s to embrace the young white audience attracted to rock'n'roll. After Army service, he moved from the independent Specialty label to ABC Paramount, and struck a rich seam of creativity. His 1957 ballad Just Because and the following year's definitive arrangement of Stagger Lee, the traditional tale of murder he set to driving R&B swing, established him as a '50s rock star. Stagger Lee was also his biggest US pop (a Number 1) and UK hit. That he followed murder with the jauntier jilted rock of Where Were You (On Our Wedding Day) was typical of his wit and versatility. 1959's upbeat Personality earned him the nickname Mr Personality, but he was never above using others' hits to his own ends – 1962's exhorting Be A Leader is little more than The Coasters' Yakety Yak with a new lyric – "just bring home those As and Bs" a father lectures his children.

Price certainly took his own advice about leading. As the rock'n'roll market waned, he had pointed the way for later rock and soul stars like Sam Cooke and James Brown by broadening his commercial interests, setting up several record companies (Double L, Turntable), running a night club, launching food brands that fed off his fame (the Lawdy Miss Clawdy Sweet Potato Cheesecakes) and diversifying into real estate, while his nose for a deal led him to being closely involved with boxing promoter Don King in setting up Muhammad Ali's Rumble In The Jungle heavyweight title fight. He died in Westchester, New York on May 3.

Geoff Brown

Al Schmitt

Engineer to the stars

BORN 1930

Every time we re-watch Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer's enchanting song Moon River in the film Breakfast At Tiffany's, we hear Al Schmitt's board mastery at work. And then there's his engineering for Sinatra, Dylan, Paul McCartney, Ray Charles, Steely Dan, Natalie Cole, Barbra Streisand and umpteen others – his range was one of his many superpowers. He was also a producer, overseeing the Jefferson Airplane's acid-dropped 1967 classic *After Bathing At Baxter's*. The Brooklyn native was mentored at his uncle's studio and later befriended by musician/recording visionary Les Paul, eventually winning more Grammys than any other engineer or producer. Raised in the era before multitracks, Schmitt knew how to place microphones, which became a lost art when fixing-it-in-the-mix arrived. "As much as sound is important to me as an engineer," he once noted, "it is the performance and the feel that sell the record."

Michael Simmons

Getty (2)

Anita Lane

Bad Seeds *éminence grise*

BORN 1960

Most likely the 'Her' in the title of Nick Cave's solo album debut *From Her To Eternity*, Anita Lane was briefly a Bad Seed and an occasional lyricist for both The Birthday Party and solo Cave. She also recorded two dramatic and sensual solo albums, *Dirty Pearl* (1993) and *Sex O'Clock* (2001). "Everyone wanted to work with her but it was like trying to trap lightning in a bottle," Cave wrote in tribute to his former paramour and collaborator.

Lane first met Cave through her former classmate Rowland S. Howard, guitarist in Melbourne post-punk maniacs The Boys Next Door. Whilst still in her teens, Lane co-authored A Dead Song, Dead Joe and Kiss Me Black with Cave for the group, who were renamed The Birthday Party in 1980. "She was the smartest and most talented of all of us, by far," the singer recalled.

When Cave went solo, Lane contributed keyboards, backing vocals and occasional lead vocals to his nascent Bad Seeds. Though she wasn't an official member after the pair split in 1983, she remained part of the inner circle, writing the lyrics to Stranger Than Kindness (about Cave, he says) on his fourth album *Your Funeral… My Trial* and adding purring vocals to his ninth album *Murder Ballads*.

Lane subsequently carved out a role as a Jane Birkin-styled foil for numerous class acts, including ex-Bad Seed Barry Adamson, Kid Congo Powers, Einstürzende Neubauten and, most notably, Bad Seed Mick Harvey's Gainsbourg tributes *Intoxicated Man* and *Pink Elephants*. Driven by, in Cave's words, "a rampant, unstable, fatal energy that would follow her all her life", after 2001's barbed pop album *Sex O'Clock* Lane devoted herself to motherhood and a wanderlust that took her from Berlin to Morocco to Sicily and back to Australia. "I kind of wanted to glorify insecurity," she once said, "rather than being confident and successful."

Martin Aston

Anita Lane: "the smartest by far".

Courtesy of Mute Records, Getty (3)

> "I wanted to glorify insecurity."
> **ANITA LANE**

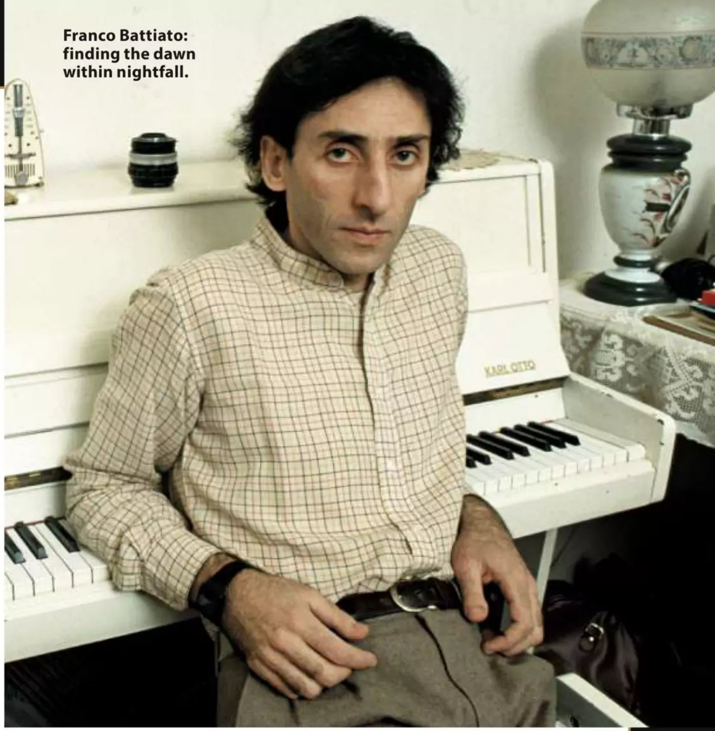
Pervis Staples

Gospel soul dynast

BORN 1935

As the only other man in The Staples Singers, Pervis Staples was often in the shadow of the soul-gospel group's father/founder Roebuck 'Pops' Staples. Yet, until he left after 1968's *Soul Folk In Action*, he was integral to the powerful, righteous vocal mix. Born on November 18, 1935 in Drew, Mississippi, he moved with the family to Chicago where Pops tutored them in gospel harmony, prioritising the range of youngest child Mavis, whose husky depth many later mistook for Pervis, a fact the Staples played on. Popular on the gospel circuit, they signed to Vee-Jay in the '50s, Uncloudy Day earning a first hit. After other gospel standards, like Will The Circle Be Unbroken?, Pervis persuaded his father to broaden the group's repertoire with folk rock covers as they moved to Epic, Dylan's A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall among them. Even greater success followed when they signed to Stax, but Pervis soon left the goup. He managed another gospel-based group of sisters, the Hutchinson Sunbeams, as they became The Emotions, ran a club, married and had six children, and was there when the Staples were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1999. He died on May 6.

Geoff Brown


Franco Battiato: finding the dawn within nightfall.

Franco Battiato

Il Maestro

BORN 1945

Though it's perhaps no surprise that the first Italian to have a million-selling album (*La Voce Del Padrone*, in 1981) was a prog-rocker, Franco Battiato was always so much more, writing soundtracks, operas, ballets, electronica and even a Eurovision entry. He looked as outlandish as Ziggy at the height of glam, wrote dense, often unfathomable lyrics that suggested he devoured the most esoteric books, and consistently produced music that was uncompromisingly Italian, way-out and wildly popular. By 1988, and the release of *Fisiognomica*, arguably his finest collection, it was the Sicilian, not Morricone, who Italians called Il Maestro. Catching the mood of all Italy, in tribute the Vatican's cultural council (which had been outraged by the sleeve of his debut LP, *Foetus*, in 1971) simply quoted the man himself: "How hard it is to find the dawn within nightfall."

David Hutcheon

Roger Hawkins

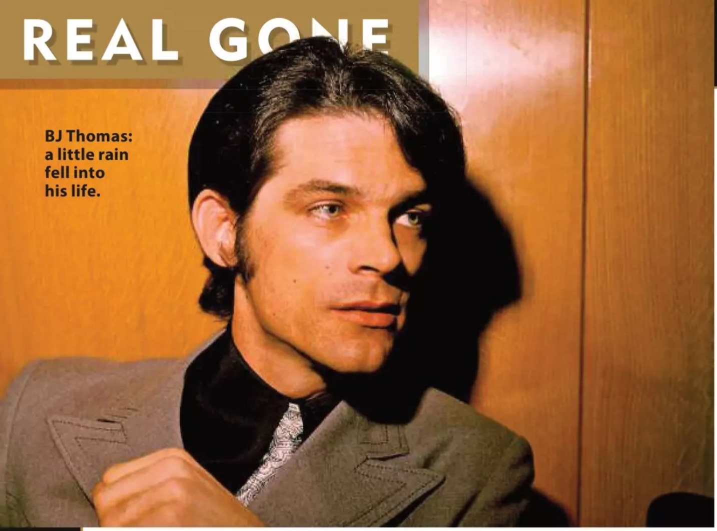
Muscle Shoals drum king

BORN 1945

In the mid-to-late '60s, when outstanding soul records on the Atlantic and Stax labels were spilling out of Muscle Shoals' Fame Studios on a daily basis, Roger Hawkins was at their beating heart, setting a supple rhythm with a funky backbeat decorated with simple yet perfect fills. As part of the Swampers rhythm section, Hawkins was a key constituent on classics by Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge, Etta James, Solomon Burke, The Staple Singers and numerous others. In 1969, the rhythm section set up their own studio in Sheffield, Alabama, where Hawkins went on to drum with Cher – whose album *3614 Jackson Highway* commemorated the studio's address – Ry Cooder, Linda Ronstadt, Bobby Womack, Willie Nelson and many more. His work was also embraced by British singers, playing with Steve Winwood on Traffic's *Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory*, then touring with them, drumming on Rod Stewart's *Atlantic Crossing*, plus sessions in other genres.

Hawkins was born in Mishawaka, Indiana, but eventually settled in Muscle Shoals after forming that historic, life-long partnership with David Hood (bass), Jimmy Johnson (guitar) and Barry Beckett (keyboards).

Geoff Brown



BJ Thomas: a little rain fell into his life.

BJ Thomas

Country pop hitmaker

BORN 1942

Born in Hugo, Oklahoma, Billy Joe Thomas came to prominence with The Triumphs via 1966's US Top 10 take on I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry. Having gone solo, 1968's Hooked On A Feeling went Top 5, then Bacharach & David's Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head, featured in the 1969 film Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid, gave him the first of two Number 1s. Thomas's soulful pop with a country tinge remained a chart presence in the first part of the '70s, though hectic touring led to a near fatal alcohol and drugs dependency. "Life was a struggle," he told me in 2011. "But music saved me." Cleaning up, 1977's gospel album *Home Where I Belong* gave him the first of five Grammys. In 1985 he provided the theme to US sitcom Growing Pains, and performed until his death from complications from lung cancer, his last charting album being 2013's acoustic *The Living Room Sessions*.

Lois Wilson

Curtis Fuller

Jazz trombone specialist

BORN 1932

A formidable improviser famed for his horn's warm, resonant sound, Curtis Fuller helped to establish the trombone as a viable solo instrument in jazz from the late 1950s. Best remembered for his indelible contribution to Coltrane's *Blue Train* album in 1957, he also enjoyed a productive spell in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in the first half of the '60s, where he wrote standout piece Alamode. Born in Detroit and raised in a Jesuit orphanage, Fuller's fascination with jazz began as a teen after hearing bebop trombonist JJ Johnson. Though he was a prolific sideman, playing with everyone from Wayne Shorter to Count Basie, he also cut a raft of well-regarded albums under his own name. A recipient of an NEA Jazz Master award in 2007, Fuller released his final album, *In New Orleans*, 11 years later at the age of 86.

Charles Waring

THEY ALSO SERVED

PRODUCER, bassist and guitarist **COUNT DUBULAH** (b.Nick Page, 1960, below) first came to prominence as part of techno fusionists **Transglobal Underground** in the early '90s. His other projects included **Temple Of Sound**, the Ethiopian/Jamaican soundclash **Dub Colossus** and further explorations of the musics of Syria, Greece and beyond. Writing in tribute, Peter Gabriel spoke of Page possessing "warmth, a generous musicality and a really original intelligence."

STAFFORDSHIRE DRUMMER **JOHN HINCH** (b.1947) played in bands including **The Pinch**, **Bakerloo Blues Line** and **Hiroshima**, the latter with vocalist **Rob Halford**. The two later joined Brum metallers **Judas Priest**. Hinch played on the band's 1974 debut *Rocka Rolla*, but left the group after that album's tour, later working in management with acts including **Fashion**, **The Bureau** and **Uli Jon Roth**.

CHARLESTON, South Carolina voice **WONDRESS HUTCHINSON** (b.1964) gave a powerful, sensuous soul performance on **Mantronix**'s electro-funk 1989 hit single, Got To Have Your Love. She was heard again the following year on Take Your Time, another UK Top 10 from the album, *This Should Move Ya*. Later credits included appearances with **Spyro Gyra**, Baltimore's **DJ Spen** and gospel house outfit **Jasper Street Co**.

BASSIST and vocalist **JOE LONG** (b.1941) joined New Jersey pop institutions **The 4 Seasons** in 1965, in time for their cover of Dylan's Don't Think Twice, released under the pseudonym **The Wonder Who?**, to hit Number 12. Nine more Top 30 singles, including 1975's US Number 3 Who Loves You, followed, before he left. He later played rock and jazz with **LaBracio** and **Jersey Bounce**. In 2018, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

MODEL and singer **NICK KAMEN** (b.1962) famously stripped off to Marvin Gaye's I Heard It Through The Grapevine, on a 1985 Levi's TV advert set in a launderette. This brought the Harlow-born former bass player to the attention of **Madonna**, who gave him the 1986 UK Number 5 hit Each Time You Break My Heart. She also co-produced Kamen's self-titled debut album in 1987. After three more LPs, Kamen gave up music to work as an abstract painter and video-maker.

FOLK SINGER, songwriter and lesbian activist **ALIX DOBKIN** (b.1940, below) started out on the '60s New York folk scene, rubbing shoulders with **Bob Dylan**. Dobkin's 1973 debut album, *Lavender Jane Loves Women* was one of the first 'out' lesbian releases. Forging an independent alternative to the male-dominated music industry, releases on Dobkin's Women's Wax Works label included the compilation, *Love & Politics, A 30 Year Saga*. She was also known for her The Future Is Female T-shirt, later an internationally recognised slogan of the women's movement.

THE FUTURE
IS FEMALE

RECORD SHOP and label owner **BOB KOESTER** (b.1932) founded what would become the Delmark imprint in St Louis in 1953. Moving to Chicago in 1958, the proudly independent label released veteran blues men, jazzers and new talent with equal care and attention, the catalogue ranging from **Sleepy John Estes** and **Buddy Guy** to **Sun Ra** and **Anthony Braxton**, among many others. In 1959 Koester opened his Jazz Record Mart, whose descendant outlet Bob's Blues & Jazz Mart continues to operate, though he sold Delmark in 2018. In 1996 Koester, also a keen vintage film collector, became one of the few non-musicians to be inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame

ALL-NIGHT RADIO LEGEND **BOB FASS** (b.1933) told his 1960s audience: "I wanna be a neuron – I don't wanna be the brain. We're all the brain." Beginning in 1963, Fass hosted Radio Unnameable on non-commercial WBAI in New York for over a half-century. The show functioned as an incubator for what's now called the counterculture: '60s regulars included **Bob Dylan** and **Abbie Hoffman**. He also debuted Jerry Jeff Walker's single Mr Bojangles and Arlo Guthrie's Alice's Restaurant live on air.

ENGINEER, producer and harmonica player **ROBERT LANOIS** (b.1947) was born in Gatineau, Quebec. He and his brother **Daniel** originally set up MSR Productions from their mother's house, and he later opened his own studio, Bob's Shack, in Waterdown, Ontario. Along with his numerous technical credits, Lanois was an experienced photographer who shot cover images for **Emmylou Harris**'s *Wrecking Ball* album, while his 2006 solo long-player *Snake Road* was nominated for a Juno award.

SINGER **JOHN DAVIS** (b.1954, below) was the 'real' voice of **Milli Vanilli**. From Anderson, South Carolina, Davis inadvertently became a star in 1989 when the French/German dance duo won the Grammy for Best New Artist for their single Girl You Know It's True. When frontmen **Fabrice Morvan** and **Rob Pilatus** admitted that they'd been lip-syncing to other singers' voices, including Davis, they were stripped of their award. In '91, Davis sang on **The Real Milli Vanilli**'s *The Moment Of Truth* with other singers who'd sung the duo's hits, and later formed a duo with Morvan.

NEW ORLEANS SAXOPHONIST **ANDREW BERNARD** (b.1943) joined Louisiana swampers **John Fred And His Playboy Band** in 1965. With bandleader **John Fred Gourrier**, Bernard co-wrote the simple but catchy January '68 US Number 1 and global bubblegum smash Judy In Disguise (With Glasses). He left after 1968's *Permanently Stated* LP, worked in the oil industry and reunited with Gourrier for the singer's last LP *Somebody's Knockin'* in 2002.

PRODUCER and songwriter **MARCEL STELLMAN** (b.1925) survived the Nazi invasion of Belgium. When peace came he worked in BBC children's programmes including **Pinky and Perky**. Later, while also serving as European manager at Decca, he produced recordings for **Edmundo Ros**, **The Goons**, and **Patrick Macnee** and **Honor Blackman**, whose 1964 song Kinky Boots was a hit in 1990. As a writer and translator of continental material, Stellman's credits included songs for **Charles Aznavour**, **Engelbert Humperdinck** and **Max Bygraves**, whose Tulips From Amsterdam was a monster success in 1958. Stellman also imported Channel 4's quiz show Countdown from French TV, and co-produced three 1978 UK hits for Belgian cartoon phenomenon **The Smurfs**.

Jenny Bulley, Michael Simmons and Ian Harrison

Liza Cowan, Getty (2), Alamy, York Tillyer

PILOT TV
podcast
TV news and reviews every Monday
Available on iTunes
@pilottvmag

All types of memorabilia inlcuding vintage posters, t-shirts and clothing, promo shop displays, handbills, tickets, tour laminates and much more!!!
WHOSWAX
The Music Memorabilia Specialist
www.whoswax.co.uk

To Advertise in
MOJO
Classified
Please call Max Garwood on
01733 366405

MOJO RECORD STORE DIRECTORY

Vinyl Eddie

An Aladdin's Cave of rarities, collectables and new vinyl awaits.

86 Tadcaster Road, York, YO24 1LR
www.vinyleddie.co.uk 07975 899839

Fish Records

New vinyl and CDs plus pre-loved vinyl. Wide selection with particular specialism in roots and Americana music.

Unit 2, Crown Courtyard, Crown Street, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8UY
www.fishrecords.co.uk 01785 818847

The Vinyl Whistle

A classic indie record shop, with four rooms of vinyl in the heart of Headingley serving coffee, beer and live music.

12 Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 2AD
www.vinylwhistle.co.uk 0113 4260588

Europa Music

Welcome to the ONLY Independent vinyl/record and CD shop in Stirling and the largest browsable vinyl record shop in Scotland.

10 Friars Street, Stirling, FK8 1HA
facebook.com/EuropaMusic/ 01786 448623

The Sound Machine

Reading's longest established independent collectors record shop.

24 Harris Arcade, Reading, RG1 1DN
www.thesoundmachine.uk.com 0118 957 5075

Five Rise Records

We are a physical and online record store, run by music lovers for music lovers.

30C Park Road, Bingley, West Yorkshire, BD16 4JQ
www.fiveriserecords.co.uk 01274 512867

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CALL MAX ON 01733 366405

MOJO SPECIALIST TO ADVERTISE TEL: MAX GARWOOD 01733 366405

MC5
the stooges
REVOLUTI
POETRY IS

Real Cool Time (clockwise from main): in matching strides, Stooges Iggy (right) and Ron Asheton at Detroit's Grande Ballroom; MC5 and Stooges wax; the MC5 sweat (including, from right, Wayne Kramer and Rob Tyner); John Sinclair prepares to spark up.

JULY 1969

...Stooges and MC5 protest pot bust!

JULY 26 "PIGS SCALP SINCLAIR", reported the Detroit anarchist periodical Fifth Estate. John Sinclair, poet, manager of the MC5 and co-founder of the White Panther Party, had been in a world of pain since Christmas 1966. Accused of selling two joints to an undercover cop, he got his enforced haircut at Oakland County jail in Michigan. "They grabbed me and held me while some ponk [sic] with a pair of scissors cut my hair," said Sinclair of the July 10 shearing. "This is what the pigs are all about. They want everyone to look and be just like them… they'll pay for this one way or another."

Luckily, Sinclair had some friends in the Detroit area he could count on. Proto-punk culture-arsonists The Stooges and the MC5 not only had his back, but were threatening something more terrifying still to the forces of reaction: both had deals with major label Elektra and were threatening to take their rock'n'roll insurrection to the US mainstream.

The groups had been signed by PR Danny Fields to Elektra after a September 1968 show at the University of Michigan (the MC5 got $15,000, with $5,000 for The Stooges, who then moved into chaotic communal headquarters the Fun House). The MC5's explosive live debut *Kick Out The Jams* had peaked in the US at Number 30 in May. In July, they were telling Jazz & Pop magazine how Sinclair hepped them to "the whole concept of energy". Said guitarist Wayne Kramer, sat in Fields' New York apartment, "if you take everything in the universe, take everything that the mind can conceive of, anything, everything, and break it down, you can only go as far as energy… energy is freedom."

The MC5's "little brother" band The Stooges, who were arguably the more enticing prospect, had no shortage of energy-as-freedom. A dysfunctional group of friends, so messed up that ever-wired frontman James 'Iggy' Osterberg was the adult in the room, their combustible mix included the Velvets, the blues and Hendrix, mixed with the out-of-control audience provocation of Jim Morrison. As The Psychedelic Stooges they'd already shared stages with Sly Stone, Cream and the Mothers at Detroit's Grande Ballroom, gaining excited infamy for Iggy's trouser-bursting, food-slathering, stage-diving live antics.

> "It was like driving by an accident… you wanna see if there's some blood."
> **RON ASHETON**

The earliest known footage of the band, filmed by Leni Sinclair, dates from a July 20 performance at the Delta Pops Festival at Michigan University Centre. The symbols are loaded: as well as a Stars And Stripes and a White Panther flag, guitarist Ron Asheton sports a Nazi armband. Iggy can be seen dropping to the floor and invading the sitting crowd, flinging a hapless girl over his shoulder (this was apparently the college dean's daughter). "People were fascinated," said Ron Asheton of the primal Stooges experience, in 1988. "It was sort of like driving by an accident, and there's a car wreck… you wanna see if there's some blood, or if you can [see], 'Oh, that guy is really fucked up…'"

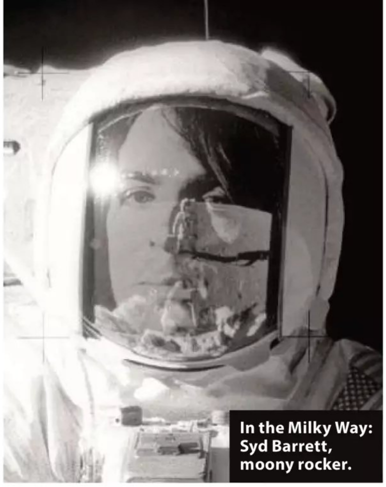
This month they had their self-titled, John Cale-produced debut album ready to go, heralded by debut 45 I Wanna Be Your Dog. There were high hopes for this smart/dumb nihilist power surge. Billboard expected similar sales as The Doors, and gushed about, "a rough and raw Rolling Stones-type sound… sophisticated pop execution… will boost The Stooges to the top." Though Iggy was sore that they renamed him 'Iggy Stooge' on the record cover without telling him, he said in 2016 book Total Chaos: "I thought that the label had class. I wanted to be with a class label, and I think long term, that was a really good thing."

Yet in the short term, not so much. As if in imitation of the album photoshoot, when a stoned Iggy tried to liven up Joel Brodsky's session by diving chin-first onto the concrete studio floor, *The Stooges* was not a success, entering the charts at Number 131, finally reaching Number 106 in October.

John Sinclair's news had been bad too. Despite The Stooges and the MC5 playing a Legal Self Defence benefit for him at the Grande Ballroom on July 23, on July 28 he was sentenced to nine-and-a-half to 10 years in prison. He would eventually serve just two, after a legal battle and the high-profile support of pals including John Lennon, Jane Fonda and Stevie Wonder. Sadly, both The Stooges and the MC5 failed to break through and would split in the next few years, though their inspirational legacy to rockers bent on going further continues to reverberate.

A final twist came on the morning of November 28, 2019, when Sinclair scored his first legal weed from Arbors Wellness. The Ann Arbor dispensary was located less than three miles from where both the Fun House and the MC5's headquarters stood. It was a fact that could not have been lost on him, as he exhaled heavy Gorilla Glue No. 4 smoke into the Michigan air.

Ian Harrison


In the Milky Way: Syd Barrett, moony rocker.

Floyd's first lunar trip

JULY 20 **To mark Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon, at 10pm BBC1's Omnibus arts show broadcasts live special What If It's Just Green Cheese? Pink Floyd play a live improvisation to accompany the moon landing, "a nice, atmospheric, spacey, 12-bar blues" (said Dave Gilmour) later named Moonhead. Judi Dench, Roy Dotrice, Ian McKellen, Michael Gough and Michael Hordern read lunar poetry, with more music from the Dudley Moore Trio and Marion Montgomery. Six days later Gilmour and bandmate Roger Waters are at Abbey Road co-producing Syd Barrett's solo debut *The Madcap Laughs*. The July 26 session – the album's last – yields Feel, Long Gone and aptly for the planetary times, Wouldn't You Miss Me (Dark Globe).**

Engels and devils: Scott entertains the mums and dads, one last time.

SCOTT'S MOR PEAK

JULY 13 Scott Walker peaks at Number 13 with his mellow 45 Lights Of Cincinnati; on the 12th, his MOR covers collection *Sings Songs From His TV Series* peaked at 7. He's had a good year – in March he hosted the above-named BBC TV show, while in April his *Scott 3* album reached Number 3. But amid other troublesome events – this summer he's up before the US draft board (he's declared unfit to serve in Vietnam), and he also sacks his manager, Maurice King – his balancing of commerciality and art will not last. Released in December, the all-original *Scott 4*, credited to Scott Engel, fails to chart, and his pop fame is over. "You can't please everybody," he reflects later.

Getty (7), Advertising Archives

ALSO ON!

BEEP, BEEP, NO!

1 **John Lennon** crashes his Austin Maxi into a ditch while on holiday in the Scottish Highlands with **Yoko Ono** and their respective kids (all above). Stitches are required. On July 9 he rejoins the rest of **The Beatles** in London to resume recording *Abbey Road*.

GOODBYE, BRIAN

3 **Brian Jones**, who was dismissed from **The Rolling Stones** in June, is found dead at his farmhouse in East Sussex. Two days later the Stones dedicate their free concert at Hyde Park to him: **Pete Townshend** and **Jim Morrison** both publish poems in Jones's memory.

MOST PECULIAR

11 **David Bowie**'s Space Oddity is released in time for the moon landings. It will become a UK Number 5 hit in November, taking until April '73 to reach US Number 15.

DEUTSCH COURAGE

25 **Can** play an epic gig at Schloss Norvenich near Cologne. Their performance of Yoo Doo Right is released in a month as side two of their debut LP *Monster Movie*.

YES KING

31 Opening with Blue Suede Shoes, **Elvis Presley** makes his live comeback to an invitation-only 2,000-strong crowd at the International Hotel showroom in Las Vegas. It's his first public performance since 1962, and he'll play more than 600 Vegas dates before he's through.

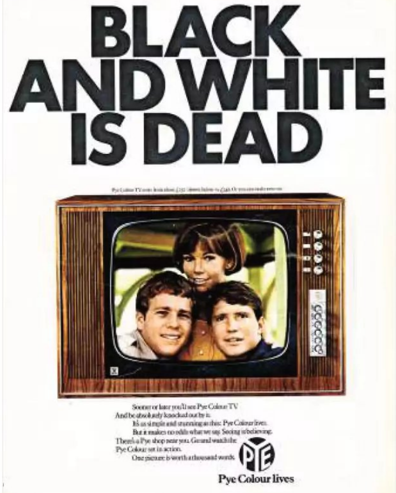
TOP TEN

SWISS SINGLES JULY 31

1. **OH HAPPY DAY** THE EDWIN HAWKINS SINGERS BUDDAH
2. **MENDOCINO** SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET MERCURY
3. **THE BALLAD OF JOHN AND YOKO** THE BEATLES APPLE
4. **AQUARIUS/ LET THE SUNSHINE IN (THE FLESH FAILURES)** THE 5TH DIMENSION LIBERTY
5. **HONKY TONK WOMEN** THE ROLLING STONES DECCA
6. **TOMORROW TOMORROW** THE BEE GEES POLYDOR
7. **GIVE PEACE A CHANCE** PLASTIC ONO BAND APPLE
8. **ISRAELITES** DESMOND DEKKER & THE ACES EMBER
9. **I WANT TO LIVE** APHRODITE'S CHILD MERCURY
10. **DIZZY** TOMMY ROE STATESIDE

Hair, apparently: at Number 4, The 5th Dimension

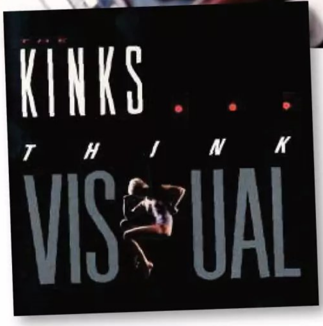
AD ARCHIVE 1969


BLACK AND WHITE IS DEAD

Sooner or later you'll see Pye Colour TV
And be absolutely knocked out by it.
It's as simple and stunning as this: Pye Colour lives.
But it makes no odds what we say. Seeing is believing.
There's a Pye shop near you. Go and watch the
Pye Colour set in action.
One picture is worth a thousand words.

Pye Colour lives

Grainy B&W telly is declared over by those heralds of the new dawn, Pye. Cost: £346, which is nearly FIVE GRAND in today's pounds.

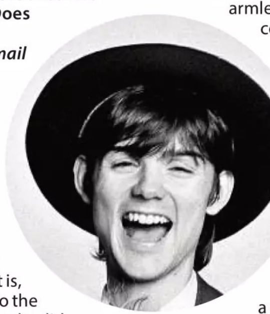


Thwarts'n'all: (clockwise from above) AC/DC's Angus Young waits for Highway To Hell to be a hit; The Kinks' 1986 long-player; tape-head Nick Laird-Clowes; James Brown, separated by five degrees from burger tycoon Ray Kroc.

What were the super flop 45s?

The answers to your pop queries and rock enigmas, shining a light into music's dark corners.

Enjoyed the *Ram* feature in MOJO 331, but something that's always puzzled me is why the 1971 single The Back Seat Of My Car was a flop in the UK. Just a year after The Beatles split you would have thought one of them playing a trombone underwater with boxing gloves on would have been a hit, so what went wrong? I would imagine there have been a few other singles down the years that have looked like sure-fire hits but died a death. Does anyone know of any and why?
Frank Henry, via e-mail



MOJO says: In the same week that George Harrison's Bangla Desh was at Number 12, Paul and Linda McCartney's The Back Seat Of My Car should have done better than Number 39. Was it a little meandering, too long after the album, with no new B-side? Which never stopped Michael Jackson rinsing *Thriller* for hits, of course. The fact is, even the mighty aren't immune to the occasional pass from the public – why did the Stones' Waiting On A Friend only make it to UK Number 50, for example, and why did none of the singles off Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* make the UK Top 20? It's always a gamble – imagine the A&R department headscratching when sure-fire smashes like The Only Ones' Another Girl, Another Planet or Big Star's September Gurls tanked, though in low-charting situations like AC/DC's Highway To Hell or The Beach Boys' Fun, Fun, Fun, time has ultimately vindicated them. In terms of songs eluding deserved success on release, though, there must be a special place for Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah. Released as a single in 1984, it was completely ignored in the US and Britain, though oddly, it did get to Number 1 in France.

BURGER SOUNDS

I was tickled to read about the Warp records/Stannah Stairlifts connection in MOJO 330. I've read that McDonald's burger magnate Ray Kroc started out as a musician. Did he record at all?
Dennis Shaw, via e-mail

MOJO says: Kroc talked about his piano-playing past in his candid 1977 memoir Grinding It Out. As a young "sheikh" in the '20s he provided musical accompaniment in a brothel in Calumet City, Illinois (singer Herbie Mintz got him the job), while at Chicago's WGES radio he recalled working with armless lyricist Tommie Malie, whose co-writes included Looking At The World Through Rose-Coloured Glasses, later recorded by Frank Sinatra. In Florida, Kroc later played with the Willard Robison Orchestra, whose leader's credits included A Cottage For Sale (as sung by Sinatra, Chuck Berry and James Brown, the latter getting funky in a McDonald's ad in 1984) and jazz standard Old Folks. Alas, Kroc gave up music for fast food before he could record, but Mark Knopfler cut a sombre musical portrait of the burger titan with his 2004 single Boom, Like That.

WHO ARE THE REAL TROUPERS?

Steve Holland, the last original member of Molly Hatchet, died on August 2, 2020. Despite there being no original members left, Molly Hatchet continues to perform live as of 2021. Is this the first active band of which all original band members have passed away?
Jurgen Verhoeven, Belgium

MOJO says: There are groups who have all passed on – Ramones and The Heartbreakers, we salute you – but as for them still being active, the orchestras of Duke Ellington and Count Basie, who debuted on wax in 1926 and 1937 respectively, are still playing, as are versions of The Platters and The Drifters, despite all original members having left this mortal coil. Other candidates include The Kingston Trio and The Wurzels – any other suggestions?

MORE BOOTLEG BLUES

Apropos the search for super bad recordings (Ask MOJO 332). I was once gifted a cassette recording of a Wings concert (by my then-schoolmate Nick Laird-Clowes, later to find fame with Dream Academy). As the band goes into Hi, Hi, Hi, on the tape can clearly be heard, "Get off my fucking foot!", presumably from a less than impressed fellow audience member! The tribulations of a cassette recorder in your pocket and a microphone down your sleeve…
Nick Paterson-Morgan, via e-mail

MOJO says: Marvellous stuff. For another no-fi treat, thanks also to Steven McGill for suggesting the live 1987 La's show released on the *Callin' All* CD: "Even now you will shout at the crowd to shut up," he says.

HELP MOJO

When I got The Kinks' *Think Visual* in 1986, The Video Shop was contemporary commentary. Now it seems very nostalgic. Does anyone have any other good examples of similar songs, preferably including references to decimal coinage or the bad influence of too much TV?
David Lloyd, via e-mail

MOJO says: Over to you, but we'll start the betting with Pulp's Disco 2000.

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (3)

FAREWELL, FRED DELLAR, BELOVED LEGEND OF THE MUSIC PRESS

FRED DELLAR'S crossword should be on this page. Until recently, he would also be hosting the Time Machine and Ask Fred sections, as well as sharing his expertise and taste as a reviewer. Each contribution was essential, as a lifetime of curation, data-gathering and enthusiasm came together in words guaranteed to inform and entertain. Sadly, Fred left us on May 15, just two weeks shy of his 90th birthday.

Born on May 29, 1931 in Willesden, north-west London, he recalled of his youth, "I spent all of my pre-teen years in a fish and chip shop – right up to the moment when a German bomb blew the roof off our Earlsfield establishment." Called up to do his national service in 1950, he was posted to Bomber Command Headquarters at RAF High Wycombe, where he started a jazz club and booked bands including the 20-piece Toni Anton's Progressive Orchestra. "I never saw the inside of an aircraft during the whole two years," Fred quipped, "though I learnt to type properly."

The skill would come in handy. A youth club DJ and lecturer, part-time "street skiffler" and habitué of nightspots including Willesden's Club Satchmo, run by compere and promoter Bix Curtis ("he taught me so much about jazz," Fred said), his love of music found an outlet in writing. As well as producing jazz fanzines, he had his first words published in Record Mirror in 1955. As Secretary of the Frank Sinatra Appreciation Society, he was one of the few invited guests present at the Chairman's only British recording sessions, at Bayswater's CTS studios in June 1962. As the '60s gathered pace, he began contributing to Hi-Fi News and writing sleevenotes, the first being *Jambo Caribe* by Dizzy Gillespie in 1965. He also retained his invitation to a Sinatra reception, as if anticipating the future world's appetite for documentary evidence of this golden time. He kept his back issues and updated his files, already accumulating the facts and analysis he would be celebrated for.

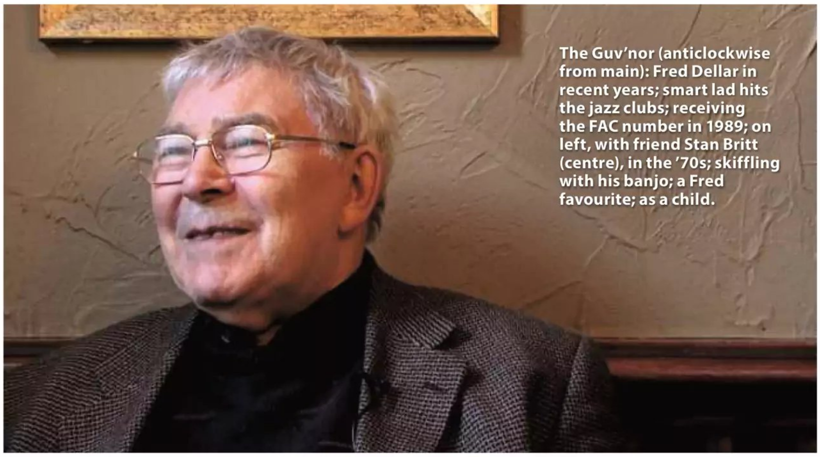
After being made redundant from his warehouse job in 1972, Fred applied to work at the NME, where he would remain until the mid-'90s. Immune from the year zero antagonism of punk – Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill famously bought him cakes – his roles included serving as deputy news editor, reviewing imports and demos, and interviewing artists including Tom Waits, Mama Cass, Stevie Wonder, Tangerine Dream and Daevid Allen. It was at NME that he hosted his Fred Fact column, an always genial outpost where readers could request discographies, have questions answered and pursue the kind of secret knowledge the pre-internet age did not give up easily. A 1989 three-part Fred Fact report on the Factory label was famously given its own Factory catalogue number – FAC227 – by Tony Wilson. He wrote books about Sinatra, country music and, the one he said he was most proud of, 1981's The NME Guide To Rock Cinema. He also contributed to Smash Hits, The Wire, Vox, The Face and, later, Loaded.

IN 1996, Fred found a home at MOJO. As well as bringing his crisp prose and broad knowledge, he felt like an envoy from a legendary time in the music industry, having survived innumerable shifts in fashion and years of change in media and technology. But Fred wore it lightly, always. Smartly dressed, modest and self-deprecating, he was happiest sharing some fact or story about one of his many interests (which could be Peggy Lee or Mark Murphy, Frankie Lymon or the history of the Grand Ole Opry, the music of the Harlem Globetrotters or the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943), and recalling London's bygone music scene and its characters. Friends including Roy Carr and Stan Britt, and the clubs, label offices and studios may have gone from the world, but they existed, still, in his memories.

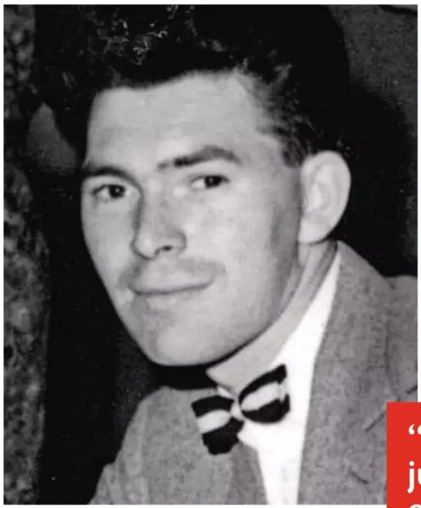
It was frequently said in the MOJO office that he should get an OBE or something similar, but this was never his style. Instead, he lived a music life, never lost the thrill of his chosen subject, and worked hard sharing that thrill as long as he could.

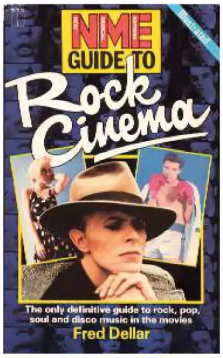
Having sadly lost his wife Pam last year, Fred scaled back his writing. At home in Northampton, he wrote "best to just sit back, enjoy life and watch those late-night movies." His final published crossword appeared in last month's issue. Fred once described MOJO as "a magazine I love", and the feeling was entirely mutual. We will miss this unique, universally liked and genuinely nice man more than words can say.

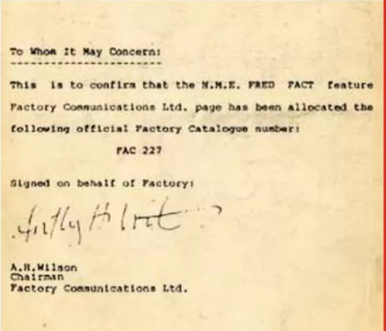
THE MOJO CROSSWORD WILL RETURN NEXT MONTH



The Guv'nor (anticlockwise from main): Fred Dellar in recent years; smart lad hits the jazz clubs; receiving the FAC number in 1989; on left, with friend Stan Britt (centre), in the '70s; skiffling with his banjo; a Fred favourite; as a child.




NME
GUIDE TO
Rock Cinema
The only definitive guide to rock, pop, soul and disco music in the movies
Fred Dellar



To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the N.M.E. FRED FACT feature Factory Communications Ltd. page has been allocated the following official Factory Catalogue number:

FAC 227

Signed on behalf of Factory:

A.H.Wilson
Chairman
Factory Communications Ltd.

> "Best to just sit back, enjoy life and watch those late-night movies."
> **FRED DELLAR**

Courtesy Fred Dellar Estate

The best jewel thieves in the world: early days Prefab Sprout (from left) Paddy McAloon, Michael Salmon, Wendy Smith and Martin McAloon.

Wendy Smith and Prefab Sprout

It began with stepping into an amazing artistic world, but when she had to go, she knew.

HELLO SUMMER 1982

I joined Prefab Sprout when I was 16. I was living in a semi-derelict cottage in Durham with my best friend who introduced me to Paddy and Martin McAloon at their dad's petrol station in Witton Gilbert. They had started Prefab Sprout with drummer Michael Salmon who lived nearby. They turned one of the garage buildings into a rehearsal studio for the band. I went to see them perform at the Brewers Arms in Gilesgate. Their hand-drawn posters used the strap line 'Simply Ears Ahead'. They were exquisite musicians, quirky performers who sometimes wore wellies. There was a Melos tape echo chamber that regularly went wrong. The music was complex, with radical chord changes and styles, literary lyrics, deft melodic bass lines and drums that skipped. At first, I didn't understand their music, couldn't hear it or fully take it in. Then the song Walk On, or Goodbye Lucille #7, found a way in, opened my ears to the rest.

I'd actually been visualising myself being in the band. I told them I could sing. Paddy invited me to sing on a demo of a song called Cherry Tree. We recorded the track at Durham University recording studio in front of Durham Cathedral, recording overnight because it was cheaper. I remember being nervous and sitting down to sing. Our voices blended well, created an atmosphere and I could handle the complex harmonies Paddy wanted to create. Later, Paddy and Mart came round and said, "Will you be in the band?" I joined the band.

It was like walking into the most amazing artistic world. We recorded [1984 debut] *Swoon*, uncommon songs written out of necessity. Michael Salmon left, [drummer] Neil Conti joined and [producer] Thomas Dolby became the fifth Sprout. We signed an eight-album deal with CBS through legendary A&R Muff Winwood. We joined a whole roster of labelmates, Alison Moyet, George Michael, Pierre Boulez, Olivier Messiaen, Maurice Ravel. We made [1985 LP] *Steve McQueen*.

Paul Slattery, AJ Barratt

"I left, had intolerable grief, re-joined and left again."
WENDY SMITH

GOODBYE 2001

I remember trips to Los Angeles, making *From Langley Park To Memphis* (1988), mixing *Jordan: The Comeback* (1990). Ahead were months in the studio, living in an unfamiliar place, too far from home. The Hollywood hills, a house with a David Hockney pool, another that once belonged to Rudolph Valentino, a stay in the Hollywood Roosevelt, the Sunset Marquis.

Touring was not our forte. Though I'm sure we were a great live band. We were never rock'n'roll, more Earl Grey than Jack Daniel's. The CEO of CBS sent a memo saying I looked like The Singing Nun and something had to be done. I bought a minuscule velvet skirt, a Rifat Ozbek sequin cat-suit, a skin-tight Pam Hogg dress. In the gaps between albums I thought about women's voices, everyone's right to be creative, the importance of music in people's lives.

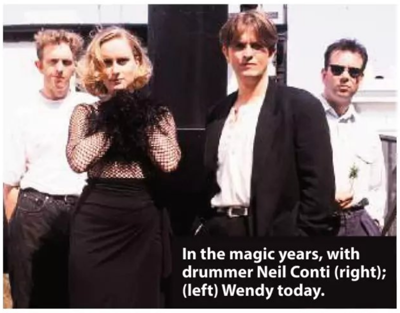
We went through a period where I left Prefab Sprout, had intolerable grief, re-joined and left again. When you've been working so closely with people in such a committed way, moving out of it is not simple. The last thing might have been the video for A Prisoner Of The Past [April 1997]. Paddy and Mart did go on a tour [in 2000] when I was effectively on maternity leave, but I was really still around until about 2001. I knew I had to move into a different thing, and I was incredibly lucky that as I was thinking about it, the Sage Gateshead was being built [Smith is Director of Contemporary Music at the northeast culture nexus].

At the beginning of the pandemic my friend Tim Burgess asked me to host a Twitter Listening Party for *Steve McQueen*. Since then, Tim has created a musical movement, bringing people together when we needed it most. Recently the band LYR [formed by author/Poet Laureate Simon Armitage] borrowed a line from the Sprout song Desire As for their beautiful song Winter Solstice. I was honoured to be invited to record the line for their track. That's where I'm still part of it. It's still a living thing, it hasn't ended.

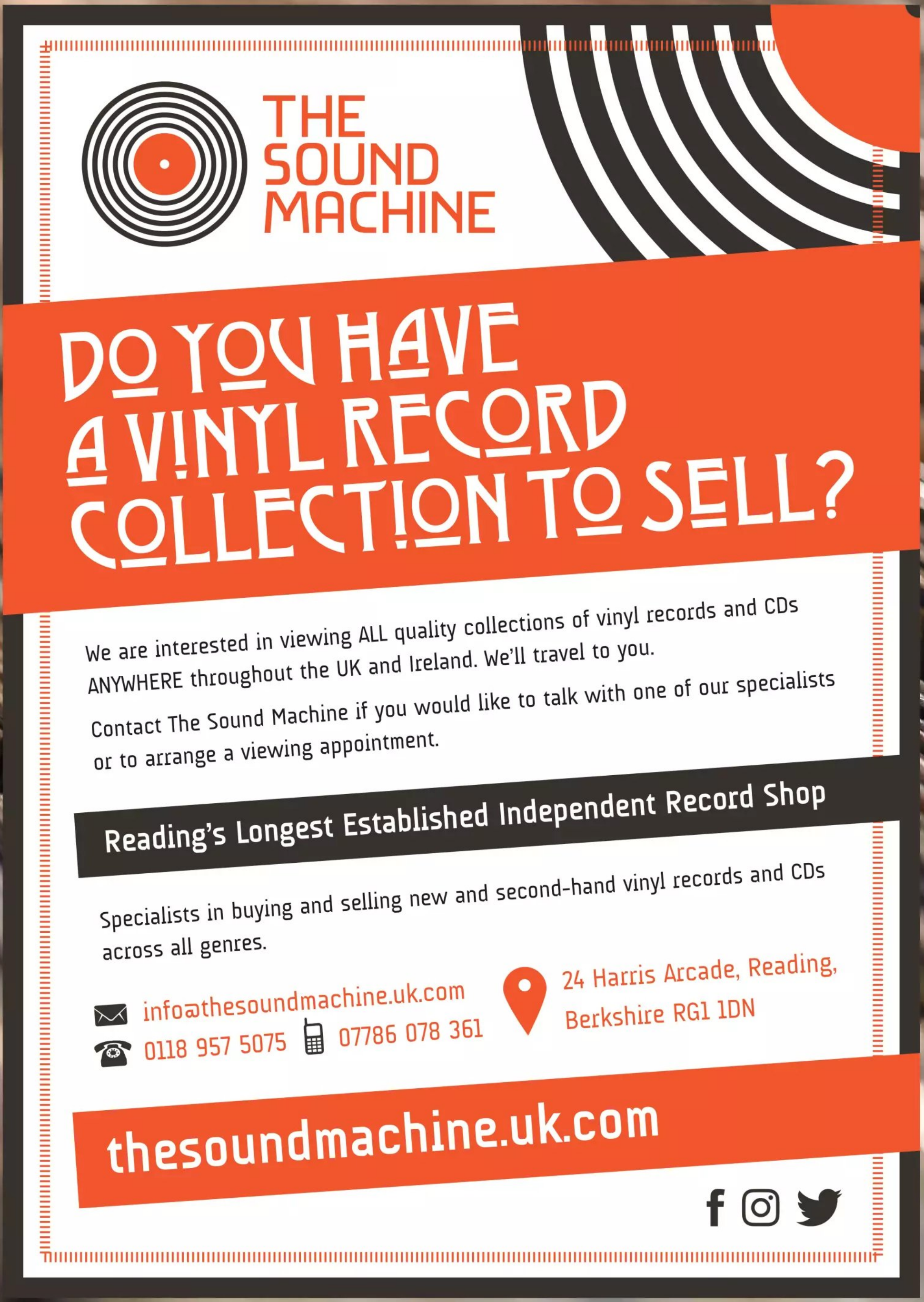
My relationships with Paddy and Martin are still extremely valuable to me. They're key to my life. Could we do it again? We've sung together when we've visited each other, but we're unlikely to, in terms of public singing. That's a gut instinct, not a fact. There's so much unreleased material (of Paddy's), and I'd love to see them live. I can't tell you how he does what he does. He's a magician. It's magic.

Additional interview by Ian Harrison

Winter Solstice by LYR featuring Wendy Smith is out now.



In the magic years, with drummer Neil Conti (right); (left) Wendy today.



THE SOUND MACHINE

DO YOU HAVE A VINYL RECORD COLLECTION TO SELL?

We are interested in viewing ALL quality collections of vinyl records and CDs ANYWHERE throughout the UK and Ireland. We'll travel to you.

Contact The Sound Machine if you would like to talk with one of our specialists or to arrange a viewing appointment.

Reading's Longest Established Independent Record Shop

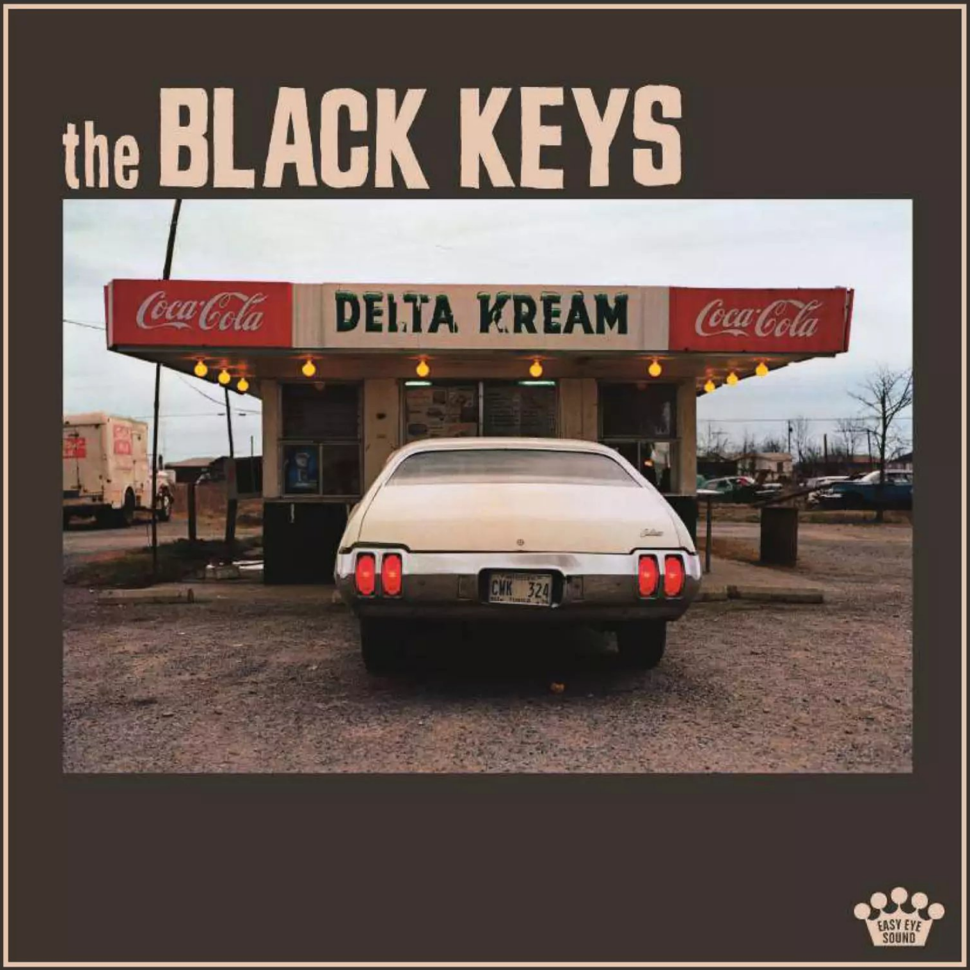
Specialists in buying and selling new and second-hand vinyl records and CDs across all genres.

✉ info@thesoundmachine.uk.com
☎ 0118 957 5075 📱 07786 078 361

24 Harris Arcade, Reading,
Berkshire RG1 1DN

thesoundmachine.uk.com

the BLACK KEYS DELTA KREAM



THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

'Recorded with former RL Burnside guitarist Kenny Brown and bassist Eric Deaton, this revisits raw and mesmerising RL Burnside and Junior Kimbrough "juke" numbers alongside more widely known blues. You completely understand how the simple groove and ringing of the strings might act as a revivifying tonic.' – **UNCUT, 8/10**

'The Black Keys' mastery of the unmathematical Hill Country style oozes here from every groove. This music is timeless, alive, and about as good as it gets.' – **MOJO** ★★★★

'Before they became one of the biggest bands in the world The Black Keys took inspiration from the hypnotic and spacious blues of Mississippi's hill country. Here the duo go back to their roots. This is timeless music — mysterious, dynamic, invigorating.' – **THE TIMES** ★★★★

'Stripped-back simmering blues. Over a 20-year trajectory, The Black Keys have never lost the blues. The now hugely successful pair sound thoroughly in their comfort zone and utterly in their element.' – **GUARDIAN** ★★★★

nonesuch

nonesuch.com